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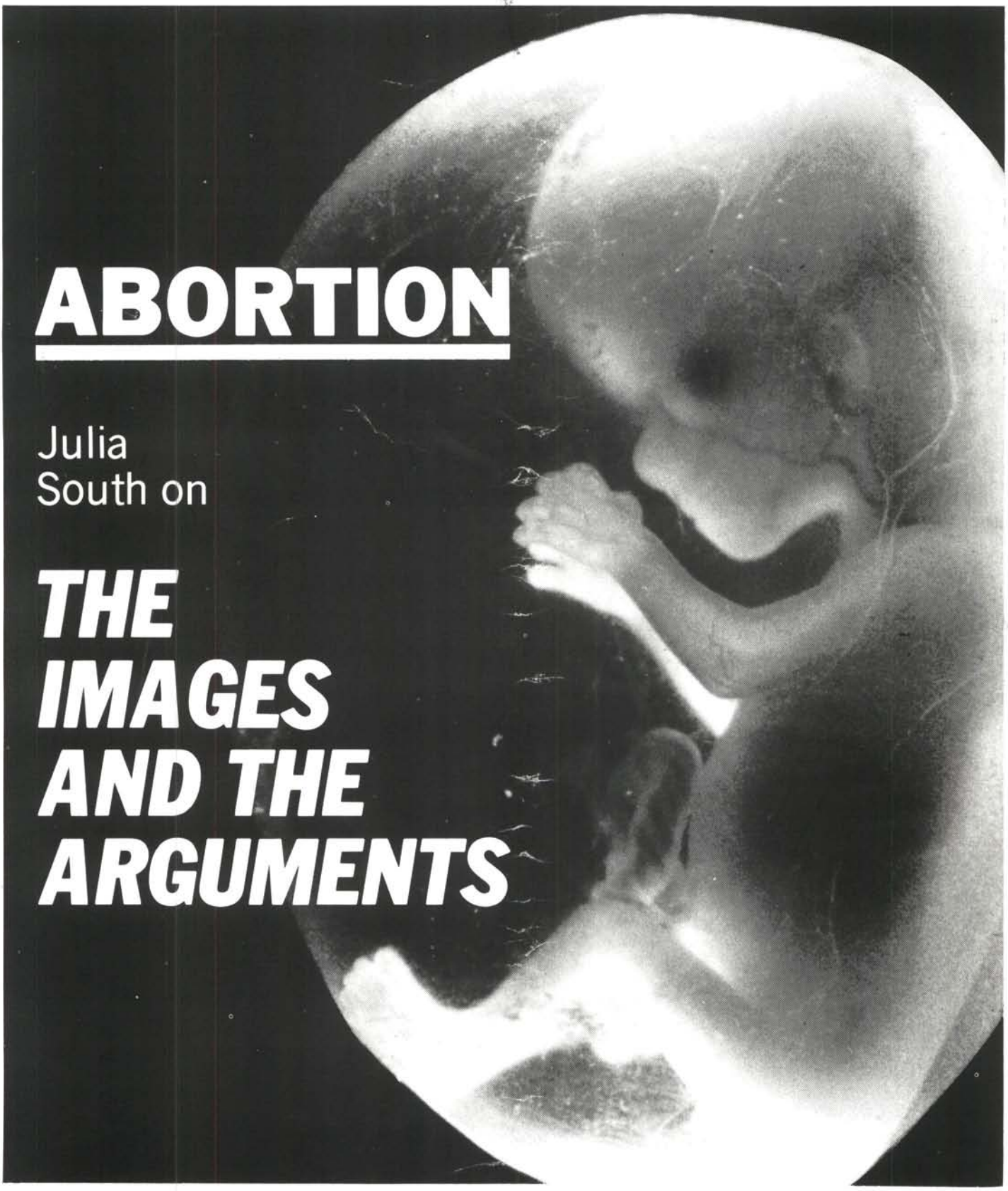

ABORTION

Julia South on

THE IMAGES AND THE ARGUMENTS

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New Statesman

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Abortion
As the right-wing 'pro-choice' lobby regroups, does the Left know what it's fighting for? JULIA SOUTH reports 10

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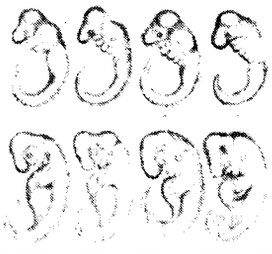
NEXT WEEK

POLITICS OF EVOLUTION

Darwin's theory has been riddled with superstitions over the years, like a religion. MARY MIDGLEY, in an extract from her new book, describes the infestation of 'real science' by arrogant and unjustified distortions



SOVIET MUSIC

CHARLES FOX looks at new developments in Russian jazz

RETURN TO THE BACKSTREETS

In the 2nd part of her major review of the climate over abortion, JULIA SOUTH asks 'how many of those who were involved in the campaign against Corrie would rally today against another anti-abortion Bill'?

CATCHING UP WITH CHINA

JONATHAN MIRSKY reviews three 'excellent' recent studies of Chinese administration, family planning and ideology, but wonders if they may not already be somewhat behind events

New Statesman

Vol 110 No 2851 15 November 1985

Lawson finds his way out of the blind alley

CHANCELLOR LAWSON is to be congratulated on the autumn budget statement that he made on Tuesday. *New Statesman* readers may be a little jolted by this judgement, but consider the facts.

Public sector borrowing is running £1 billion above target this year and the Chancellor has sensibly decided to do nothing about it. Public spending next year will be over £4 billion higher than the total figure that only weeks ago we were being told was absolutely top whack. But the new Lawson line is that this, too, is all right by him and even leaves room for substantial income tax cuts to come. And all of this has to be combined with the fact that last month at the City bankers' dinner the same Chancellor Lawson made the formal announcement that monetarism was dead. (It has actually been dead for some time, but now all those who couldn't understand it in the first place will be pleased to know that all that mumbo jumbo about M0, M1 and M3 has been completely dropped. On Tuesday we were not even given a forward forecast for Thatcherism's beloved Public Sector Borrowing Requirement, lest a run on the pound might ensue.)

Our Nigel of course, as a politician, has to pretend that his road is still dead straight; that it contains no U-shaped bends; and that it is not leading to a Keynesian Damascus. He has, consequently, done a good deal of the usual juggling with the figures so that he can stand at the despatch box and say with a straight face that the government is continuing to maintain firm control over public spending. He only gets away with it through the funny accounting in which public spending is done by deciding to flog off even more of our public property next year than he was already intending to do (an extra £2.5 billion to make a total of £4.75 billion); and by the purely paper transaction of cutting the 'contingency reserve' included in the totals by a further £1.5 billion.

It would have been better if he could have remained consistently honest for ten seconds. The privatisation of British Gas next year would 'enable tax cuts to be brought forward to the great benefit of the economy' was what he said one moment. When, a moment later, Roy Hattersley asked him to confirm that there could be no tax cuts this year or next *without* the sale of British Gas, Chancellor Nigel replied: 'I said nothing of the sort and therefore I can confirm nothing of the sort'.

It is also an obvious scandal that, when the government's own report, commissioned by the Department of the Environment but let out this week with zero publicity, concludes that over £20 billion is required just to bring inadequate local authority housing stock up to properly habitable conditions, the Chancellor should be planning to give away £2.5 billion in tax cuts to the better off next April — money that in the present state of the economy will simply fuel an old fashioned consumer and import boom.

ABOVE ALL, though, what the Chancellor said on Tuesday was in effect a confirmation of the fact that the whole of the last six years of Thatcherite economics has been a tragic journey down a cul-de-sac. The promise that Thatcherism at least *seemed* to be holding out was that its entirely new and brutal approach to economic policy would reverse the long-term financial and industrial decline of the United Kingdom. After six years — a

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period longer than the Second World War, or the whole of the post-war Attlee government — even the government must be prepared to be judged on the record of the past and the prospect for the future.

At the Lord Mayor's Banquet in the City of London on Monday the Prime Minister gave us her view of where we have reached. There is, she said, 'a process of renewal spreading through the country'. Presumably the latest report from the industrialists who are supposed to be on her side in this process had not reached her before her speech was drafted. For, on that same Monday, the Confederation of British Industry published its comment on the current industrial state of play.

To any student of the British economy since 1945 it is a document redolent with nostalgia. Things are not getting better, they are much the same. What is more, as a result of the decimation of British manufacturing industry actively encouraged by the Thatcher government's policies over exchange and interest rates, they are much the same at a substantially lower base level.

For example, the CBI says: 1. 'UK companies have continued to lose ground in unit labour cost competitiveness against overseas competitors'. 2. 'The average figure for earnings is twice the weighted average of the rest of the traditional industrial world. *This is not a sustainable position.*' 3. 'Fifteen per cent of manufacturing firms in October expected skill shortages to restrict output growth over the next four months.' 4. 'Unemployment is expected to remain at about 3.2 million during 1986.' 5. 'The annual increase in labour costs per unit of output this year marks a sharp deterioration in our performance. 6. 'Comparison with the productivity figures for our main competitors shows a "competitiveness gap" of 4 per cent.' So much for Thatcher's 'process of renewal'.

CHIC PIX

THE
CONSUMER
CATASTROPHE

A
FEMINIST VIEW

CHIC PIX
at the ICA
and Compendium

READ

I WALKED
WITH A
ZOMBIE

Sidgwick & Jackson
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CHIC PIX

___ I FOUND OUT ___

The CBI is using these facts to advance a new argument for incomes restraint, which Thatcherism incidentally has always maintained should be left to market forces. The central point, though, is that when the Chancellor seeks to argue, as he did on Tuesday, that yet more tax cuts will 'further reinforce the economy's flexibility and dynamism', it may be good Tory politics, but it is already a proven failure as an economic strategy.

In the mid-1960s the British economy had an underlying growth in its productivity of somewhere around 3 per cent a year. That was the rate at which the economy as a whole could, therefore, grow without generating unacceptable inflationary pressures — though then as now, the level of imports used to begin to rise a bit uncomfortably at that rate and shortages of skilled labour became evident.

Chancellor Lawson's proud boast this week is that we have got back to 3 per cent growth. As the CBI makes clear, absolutely nothing else has been changed by a government that has presided over the period when the British economy had, but failed to exploit, the massive windfall advantage of North Sea oil. Lawson's boast this week was in fact an epitaph on an irrecoverable national disaster. □

Small snag down in the City

THE SELF-PROCLAIMED party of law 'n order, it seems, is not going to be deflected by minor matters like a judge finding that what it is doing is illegal. A Scottish judge has ruled that, at any rate in Scotland, the government does not have controlling ownership of the Trustee Savings Bank. The TSB, by the quirk of its history, belongs to those who deposit money with it, the judge decided. But the word from Whitehall was immediate and unequivocal — the government intends to press on with the flotation next February regardless.

The government's hardline position is entirely ideological. The flotation won't even help Nigel Lawson fiddle his public expenditure figures, because the money raised will be kept by the TSB as its capital base. What the government and its banking friends did not like was the idea of an active 'third force' in banking, driven not by the motive of making maximum profits, but by the motive of providing an effective banking service to its customer-owners in those parts which normal commercial banking did not reach — particularly amongst the working class. (For the back history, see *NS* 18 January.)

Even if it pushes brazenly ahead on the basis that it has the authority of an Act of Parliament to do so, the government may still be in difficulties. At the moment, the TSB is specifically exempted from the ordinary regulatory provisions of the 1979 Banking Act. But, if it is privatised, the TSB will have to apply like everyone else for a banking licence. It would normally be odd for the Bank of England to grant such a licence to an institution where such a major dispute surrounded the legitimacy of its capital structure.

Even if the government gets this week's judgement overturned on appeal, the case could well go to the European Court and the legal arguments could certainly drag on well beyond next February. In reality, if the government presses on, the TSB would probably be given a licence and the flotation achieved, though with greater difficulty because of this new element of uncertainty.

But in that case the European Court could easily find that depositors had been improperly deprived of their property and order full compensation to them. Current estimates are that this could amount to as much as £850 million — the value of TSB assets on flotation. Then Chancellor Lawson would be sorry that he did not check who owned the family silver before he sold it. □

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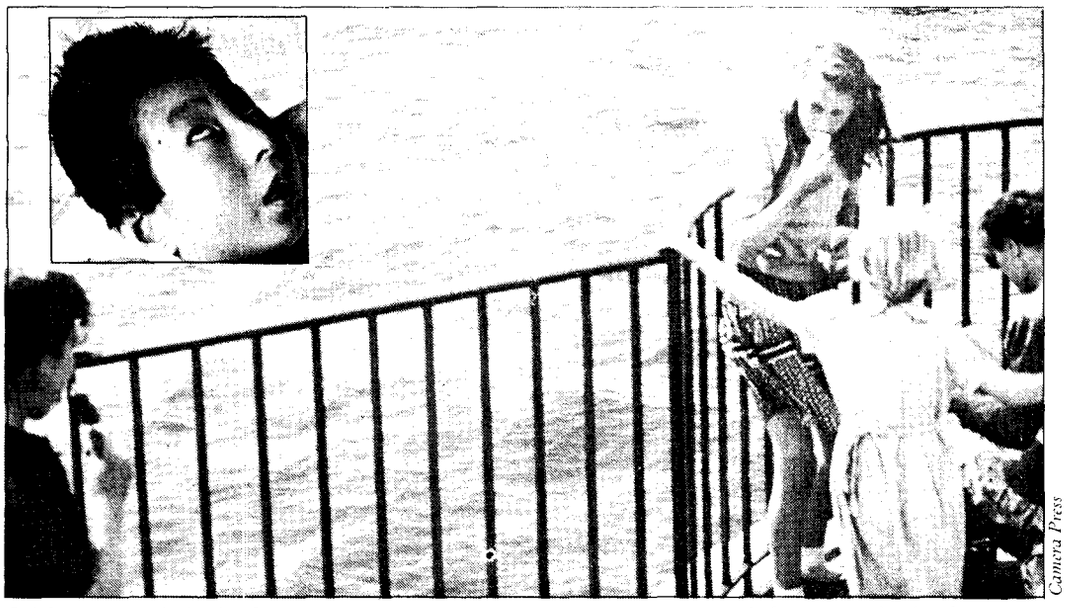
WILL WHITEWASH CLEAN UP MERCURY-POLLUTED MERSEY?



Camera Press

Camera Press

Children play on the banks of the Mersey. Could they eventually be at risk from the kind of mercury poisoning that had such terrible effects at Minamata (inset)?

CONFIDENTIAL internal documents from the North West Water Authority passed to the *New Statesman* show that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is seriously alarmed at the level of mercury found in fish in Liverpool Bay. Yet the response planned by the authority is to spend more than £100,000 on studies 'to prepare detailed arguments which form the economic and scientific justification for the use of the present sea-disposal site.' IAN WILLIAMS reports

THE DOCUMENTS show that the *average* local fish catch has over 0.25 milligrams of mercury per kilo. This is already close to the official Environmental Quality Standard (EQS) of 0.3 mg per kilo. Indeed the EQS is itself under critical scrutiny in the wake of the devastating effects of the Minamata disaster in Japan. People who saw the gruesome mental and physical effects of mercury consumption caused by sea dumping there may well worry about the consequences in the North West. Mercury levels in the Mersey are nowhere near those of Minamata; but they are increasing all the time — and the effects are cumulative.

The NWWA appears more worried about a possible tightening of standards. Under the 1974 Dumping at Sea Act the MAFF has the responsibility for monitoring and licensing sea-dumping, so the NWWA's proposed 'study' is designed to ensure a renewal of the licence next March. Even last year the MAFF was saying 'it would appear unwise' to increase the inputs of heavy metals given the (justifiable) concern of the fishing industry.

Inedible salmon?

The pollution is one of the prices paid for pioneering the Industrial Revolution. The NWWA has been very proud of its record in cleaning up the Mersey. But although it trumpets that salmon are returning to the river after a century's absence, the fish may not be all that safe to eat.

Mercury enters the Irish Sea directly from ICI operations up the Manchester Ship Canal, as well as from the NWWA's dumping of 'sludge' out in Liverpool Bay. There is also an historical input from the mud in the Mersey itself which has been acting as a sort of U-bend for the North West's effluent for a century so that it is apparently *twenty times* the natural level. Even if all mercury discharges were stopped now, natural sedimentation and the dredging operations in the Mersey would still ensure continuing contamination. Not very reassuringly, the NWWA document says that 'no adverse effects have been demonstrated'.

But the direct flows from Trafford Park and the NWWA's dumpings pose a dangerous trade off between pence and poison. ICI installed plant ten years ago at Runcorn which reduced the discharge by 80 per cent. This could be reduced even further – but ICI tell the *NS* that they are meeting EEC standards and that 'any decision on replacement will be based on when economic costs can justify the hundred million pound plus investment in new membrane cells'.

Further up-river ICI's other plant at Trafford Park is the major source of mercury in the 'sludge' produced by Davyhulme Sewage works, which is three times the background level. It also contributes to the mercury levels in the final effluent discharged into the Mersey by the works after the sludge has been filtered out. Here the threat of tighter mercury effluent standards is countered by 'unprofitability' if costly investment were necessary, with consequent closure and job losses.

The idea of dispersal by the sea is being nonsensed by gravity, (heavy metals *sink*) and by the currents and tides of Liverpool Bay. There is doubt about these but the most recent studies indicate that the bottom flow is shore-wards, taking the sludge right back with it.

Since the fish mercury levels are an average for the area, it's a matter of even more concern that the dumping zones are breeding grounds, especially for bottom dwelling — and feeding — flatfish, like plaice and sole which form a significant part of the £1.5 million annual Liverpool Bay fish landings.

If the proposed justification fails and the MAFF refuses to renew the licence, then the NWWA will have 8,000 tons of unsavoury 'sludge' a day to dispose of, and no takers. ●

Fascist prosecutes journalist

ITALIAN FASCIST Roberto Fiore, the London-based fugitive convicted by a Rome court in March 1984 for terrorist offences, is prosecuting an Italian journalist — also in London — for alleged criminal libel.

Riccardo Maffey, London correspondent for the radical daily *Paese Sera*, faces prosecution in Bologna — Italy has no civil libel — on 19 December for an article allegedly linking Fiore with the Bologna train bomb attack last Christmas which left 17 dead. Maffey is one of the few Italian correspondents to report on the activities of the several right-wing Italian terrorists hiding in Britain.

The article, argues Maffey, was based on informaion already published in *Searchlight*, *Mail on Sunday* and broadcast on *News at 10*: 'Why hasn't Fiore prosecuted the British press? He hasn't done so because he is worried about the publicity', says Maffey. 'He is taking this action against me because he hopes I won't write anything about him which will get back to Italy'.

Fiore, 26, is a leading member of the Armed Revolutionary Nuclei (ARN) and now works as a mini-cab driver in Streatham, South London. Last year he was convicted of subversive conspiracy and organising an armed gang and was sentenced in his absence to nine years imprisonment. The extradition charges against him include attempted murder, six counts of arson and three armed robberies. But the Home Office has refused to act against him. In August 1985 Leon Brittan said he was constrained by European Community law: 'Fiore...has statutory right of appeal against any decision to deport him and we would be required to show that his personal conduct was such as to constitute a present threat to one of the fundamental interests of society.'

This stance has even angered Conservative MPs like Teddy Taylor who said it was 'almost unbelievable' that terrorists could not be deported simply because they were EEC nationals. The Italian government is also furious. On 29 June Prime Minister Bettino Craxi personally asked Mrs Thatcher to intervene and deport Italian right-wing terrorists. Nothing was done. Two weeks later, Mrs Thatcher told the American Bar Association: 'We need action — action to which all countries are committed until the terrorist knows that he has no haven and no escape'.

Mark Hollingsworth

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TRADE UNIONISTS JUST AS RADICAL AT HOME

THE TRADE UNION political fund ballots held so far have been a double blow for the government, which made the mistake of believing its own propaganda about 'unrepresentative' trade union leaders, as JOHN RENTOUL reports

WHICH is 'more democratic': an 83 per cent vote for Labour on a turnout of 57 per cent, or an 83 per cent vote for Labour on a turnout of 39 per cent?

Of the 2.4 million trade union members balloted so far, 83 per cent have voted to go on funding the Labour Party in the ballots required by the 1984 Trade Union Act.

But an analysis of the ballot results shows that not only do postal ballots — as is well known — produce a much lower 'turnout' than ballots conducted at the workplace, but they don't even produce the more 'moderate' result that the government was relying on to bankrupt the Labour Party. In fact, the postal ballots so far have produced a very slightly better result for Labour.

results to date, divided into 'fully postal' and 'workplace' ballots. (The workplace ballots in most cases include a postal element, for union members off sick, for small groups of scattered members, or pensioners.)

When the government proposed political fund ballots in its Green Paper in January 1983, it wanted secret postal ballots only. The Green Paper complained that unions lacked 'the will to adopt [these] more democratic and fairer voting procedures'.

The TUC persuaded Tom King, then Employment Minister, to allow unions to adopt whatever system best suited their circumstances and traditions, although it had to be by secret individual ballot (as opposed to a show of hands). ●

How they voted

Workplace ballots

	members (thousands)	turnout	'yes' vote
SOGAT	209	57	78
ISTC	49	68	87
UCW	196	69	76
NCU	121	79	81
GMB	825	61	89
APEX	90	60	73
Bakers	36	64	90
NUR	135	61	87
Platemakers	3	89	75
ASLEF	24	85	93
TSSA	49	67	69
Ceramic workers	32	73	76
Scalemakers	1	54	77
TGWU	1308	50	79
COHSE	220	40	93
Garment workers	66	87	91
Dom. Appl. workers	4	68	85
Blind & Disabled	3	83	90
total/average	3371	57.1	82.8

Postal ballots

	members (thousands)	turnout	'yes' vote
FTAT	80	30	72
AUEW	809	37	84
EETPU	362	45	84
Seafarers	21	34	87
total/average	1272	38.8	83.5

Now baby-milk firms woo British mothers

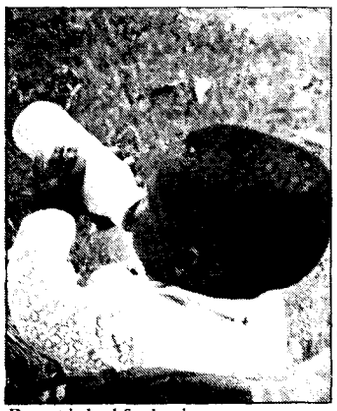
AS MORE WOMEN in Britain are opting to breast feed their babies than ever before — 67 per cent of mothers at the last count in 1980 compared to 10 per cent in the Sixties — the milk substitute manufacturers are retaliating with increased blandishments in National Health Service clinics. These companies are flooding the clinics with free samples, advocates of breast-feeding claim.

Child care and infant nutrition experts expressed their concern at this stepped-up commercial campaign at a two-day Conference on Breast-Feeding held at Wembley last week and sponsored by the National Childbirth Trust. They believe that the natural and superior practice of breast-feeding — breast-fed babies are more immune to infection than bottle-fed babies — is being deliberately undermined by the powdered milk companies, both here and abroad.

Jean Rowe, a director of the Baby-milk Action Coalition and a Conference workshop leader, is convinced that baby clinics are key targets for infant formula promotion and she urges fellow child care experts to complain to the DHSS about this: 'Baby-milk formula representatives come in to talk to Health Visitors in the clinics, leaving their commercially-oriented free gifts — samples of powdered milk, pencils, calendars, videos. The Health Visitors do not appear to see these visits as intrusive.'

Apparently impervious to such pressure, most British mothers are continuing to opt for breast-feeding 'in spite of current hospital practices rather than because of them', she says. In fact, we now see the curious world phenomenon of more Western mothers choosing to breast-feed while Third World mothers opt for the bottle. Jean Rowe believes this is because the EEC is engaged in exporting powdered milk to the Third World.

The results are pernicious with 'more and more Third World babies dying from poor hygiene in the



Camera Press

Breast is bad for business

— with resulting cases of infant gastro-enteritis', Jean Rowe says.

making up of the formula — unsterilised water, inaccurate mixing

In perpetrating the hard sell, powdered milk companies are contravening the 1981 World Health Organisation's International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk substitutes, a code dedicated to 'fostering breast-feeding' and to prohibiting the advertising and distribution of samples which 'idealise' the use of breast-milk substitutes. The WHO code hasn't been adopted by the British government — instead the Food Manufacturers' Federation has its own less rigorous code which does, at least, ban direct advertising towards mothers.

But the glamorous image of breast-milk substitutes has a particular attraction for Asian mothers, Jean Rowe claims. She observed, while working in Southall with its high Asian population, 'a tendency for Indian and Pakistani mothers to respect the shiny, clean milk tins — apparent emblems of Western technology'.

Ruth Inglis

No Sir, you can't see the plans

LABOUR councillors in nuclear free zones are being denied access to wartime emergency planning documents, even though the same documents are being issued to senior council officers.

A copy of an emergency planning document, known as BARPLAN, which relates to the defence of Barry, Cardiff and Newport, was sent to the Emergency Planning Officer and the Chief Fire Officer of South Glamorgan county council by the Navy Flag Officer in Plymouth. Officers working for neighbouring Gwent county council have also received copies. BARPLAN has a 'restricted' classification and was given to the Glamorgan officers on the understanding that its contents shouldn't be revealed to 'unauthorised' people.

It's not clear whether the chair of the council's Public Protection Committee, Barry Murray, is such a person, but the Chief Executive is refusing him access to the document while legal advice is being sought.

It has also been learned that Glamorgan's Wartime Controller-designate regularly attends meetings at the Army's Welsh headquarters in Brecon where wartime and peacetime contingencies, including strikes, are discussed. Some councillors have suggested that this is incompatible with South Glamorgan's nuclear-free policies, though Barry Murray says it's 'an important issue that the Labour group hasn't yet adequately discussed'.

The case highlights the awkward situation faced by officers working for such councils. The situation is made worse by the Home Office demanding civil defence plans to be completed by the end of December.

But even local government officers don't have unrestricted access to emergency planning material. At a recent BARPLAN review meeting, Gwent's chief executive was asked to leave because he was 'not cleared with respect to the Official Secrets Act' — a situation which would appear to make his role as county Wartime Controller rather difficult.

Tom Horlick-Jones

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BIG ISSUES TO DISCUSS AT CND'S CONFERENCE

ANY ATTENTION paid by the press to this weekend's annual CND conference will probably be focussed on the election of Joan Ruddock's successor as chairperson. Well-filtered, thoroughly-chewed resolutions and knots of delegates putting down deeper grassroots have less 'media sexiness' than a change of face at the top. But as AUDREY MINDLIN reports, important changes are occuring within the Campaign

THERE'S a growing desire among members to link the arms race with the issue of world hunger. Local CND groups ballotted over the past few weeks have overwhelmingly identified this as their top priority. The first resolution to be debated at the conference is on disarmament and development and states that the arms race is a cause of poverty and deprivation.

General secretary Meg Beresford denies that this is the response of a flagging peace movement to the greater success of Band Aid and the like. But she acknowledges that CND needs an injection of new energy after six years of solid campaigning and a 'feeling that people have done everything there is to do.'

A new campaign is being launched next year to dispel such feelings. Called the 'Basic Case', it will be aimed at converting those who already oppose Cruise and Trident to full unilateralism. It will start by projecting the potential positive results of disarmament rather than concentrating, as in the past, on the horrors of nuclear war.

Worries on Freeze

Another major conference issue looks like being the Freeze campaign launched this week (*NS* 1 November). Great unease was generated by Freeze campaign literature which rejected 'one-sided disarmament' — a phrase associated with Michael Heseltine. Despite a promise to change the wording, mutual suspicions between the two organisations persist. One candidate for chairperson, Joy Hardcombe, states: 'I have always opposed our adoption of a nuclear freeze'.

Links with the Labour party also look like being on the agenda. Since the 1983 election CND has been busily shunning such links — but Vic Allen, another candidate, states baldly that 'CND should work for the return of a Labour government. This may cause difficulties, but they will have to be overcome in the interests of unilateralism.'

Conference will discuss a resolution on Star Wars — 'an admission of the bankruptcy of nuclear deterrence' — and will be closely following the progress of the arms talks. Watch out also for Billy Bragg and Red Wedge at City Hall, Sheffield on 15-17 November ●

Nationalists try to patch up differences

THE FOUR Scottish and Welsh nationalist MPs met at Westminster this week to try and work out how they could end two years of squabbling between their parties and start collaborating for their mutual benefit. An alliance between the SNP and Plaid Cymru at the next election would enable them both to bargain for more television time. According to SNP leader Gordon Wilson MP, together they could even end up holding the balance of power in a hung Parliament.

The four MPs — Gordon Wilson and Donald Stewart for the SNP and Dafydd Elis Thomas and Dafydd Wigley for Plaid Cymru — decided on Tuesday to restore full fraternal relations between the parties and increase tactical cooperation in parliament. They did not see any difficulties in agreeing joint policies on social, economic and defence issues, although there were differences on the strategy for self-government and steel policy. In line with the recent recommendation from both parties' executives, more joint discussions will be held.

Europe caused splits

Diplomatic relations between the two parties were broken off in the run-up to last year's European elections because of a disagreement over tactics. The SNP, thanks mainly to its MEP for the Highlands and Islands Winnie Ewing, allied themselves with the right wing Irish Fianna Fail and French Gaullists, while Plaid Cymru wanted to join a nationalist grouping.

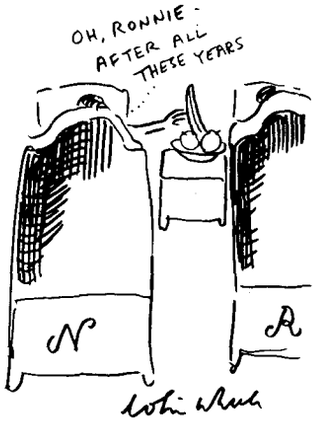
Last month Plaid's president Dafydd Elis Thomas announced to his annual conference that the two parties would be drawing up a joint programme for the next election. He was immediately rebuffed by Gordon Wilson, who said that the SNP had heard nothing from Plaid and had not even been formally invited to attend its conference. The MPs are now hoping that these differences can be put behind them.

Rob Edwards

MISCELLANY

Apples and bananas

When in Washington, do it the way the Reagans do. Among the torrent of trivia the US media have produced regarding the visit to Washington of Prince Charles and Princess Diana there are the following boudoir facts. The British Embassy set aside two bedrooms for the Wales's, plus a



sitting room and two baths. (If you want to know the decorators, a collect call to the Ambassador is bound to be accepted and price details provided.) The Prince's bedroom has two single beds and a chaise and the Princess's an arrangement officially described as 'two twin beds pushed together'. This may look like a Trust House Forte economy or perhaps a sexual compromise — actually it's a political gesture. When Mr and Mrs Reagan came to the White House, they ostentatiously disposed of the double bed in which Presidents Ford, Carter and their respective wives had slept, and announced a return to the twin beds that were the Hollywood moral standards when Mr Reagan made movies. Mrs Reagan says she doesn't like to disturb her husband's sleep — she has also said she eats bananas in the bedroom, rather than apples, for those times she wakes up feeling peckish and doesn't want the gnashing of teeth on apple flesh to arouse the President. A bedroom supply of both fruits was laid in for the Prince and Princess.

ABC revisited (again)

Grovelling apologies from Duncan Campbell to Peace News *for the failure to include, in last week's* NS, *that paper's name alongside the* Leveller *and* Journalist *magazines in the rolls of honour of those who risked the fury of the courts in the 1977 'We name the anonymous Colonel B' campaign. Colonel B — real name Colonel Hugh Johnstone — was, it may be recalled, the former commanding officer of the now-notorious Cyprus spy base who gave evidence on intelligence work in the 'ABC' Official Secrets case. Yet another oversight in last week's roll of honour was the clerk of Tottenham magistrates' court whose fastidiously tidy bureaucratic mind actually caused the 'blowing' of B's secret identity. How so? Truth was, the evil-defendants had calculated before the poor anonymous man even appeared that only one Army Colonel knew enough about intelligence to give evidence and had amassed clippings on his career. These were put to B in cross-examination; was he not the self-same officer who was openly talked about as the 'Don' of the communications underworld in the Army magazine* Wire*? Did his name not appear many times there in the black and white? 'Yes', said Johnstone. 'Ah', said the clerk to counsel, 'and on what page of what issue does that reference appear?' Counsel replied, the purposeful pens of* Peace News *moved quickly, and the rest is history . . .*

Why be rational?

Opinion polls often only prove how perverse people are. The British Social Attitudes Survey (1983) found 0.4 per cent in favour of higher taxes and social spending *and* more public ownership *and* less private health care *and* less private education (throw in the rest of Labour's programme and we'd have been down to Michael Foot and his dog). This week further evidence of wilful illogic is provided by the *TV Times* Miss World opinion poll. Fifteen per cent of the sample think beauty contests are 'degrading to women', while 91 per cent believe they're 'harmless fun'. The 6 per cent overlap is not just men who think they're degrading to women but harmless to them; the overlap is the same for both sexes.

Weak and feeble woman

Top: *Queen Victoria* — NS *cover, 27 May 1983*
Bottom: *Elizabeth I — Lord Mayor's banquet at the Guildhall, 11 November 1985*

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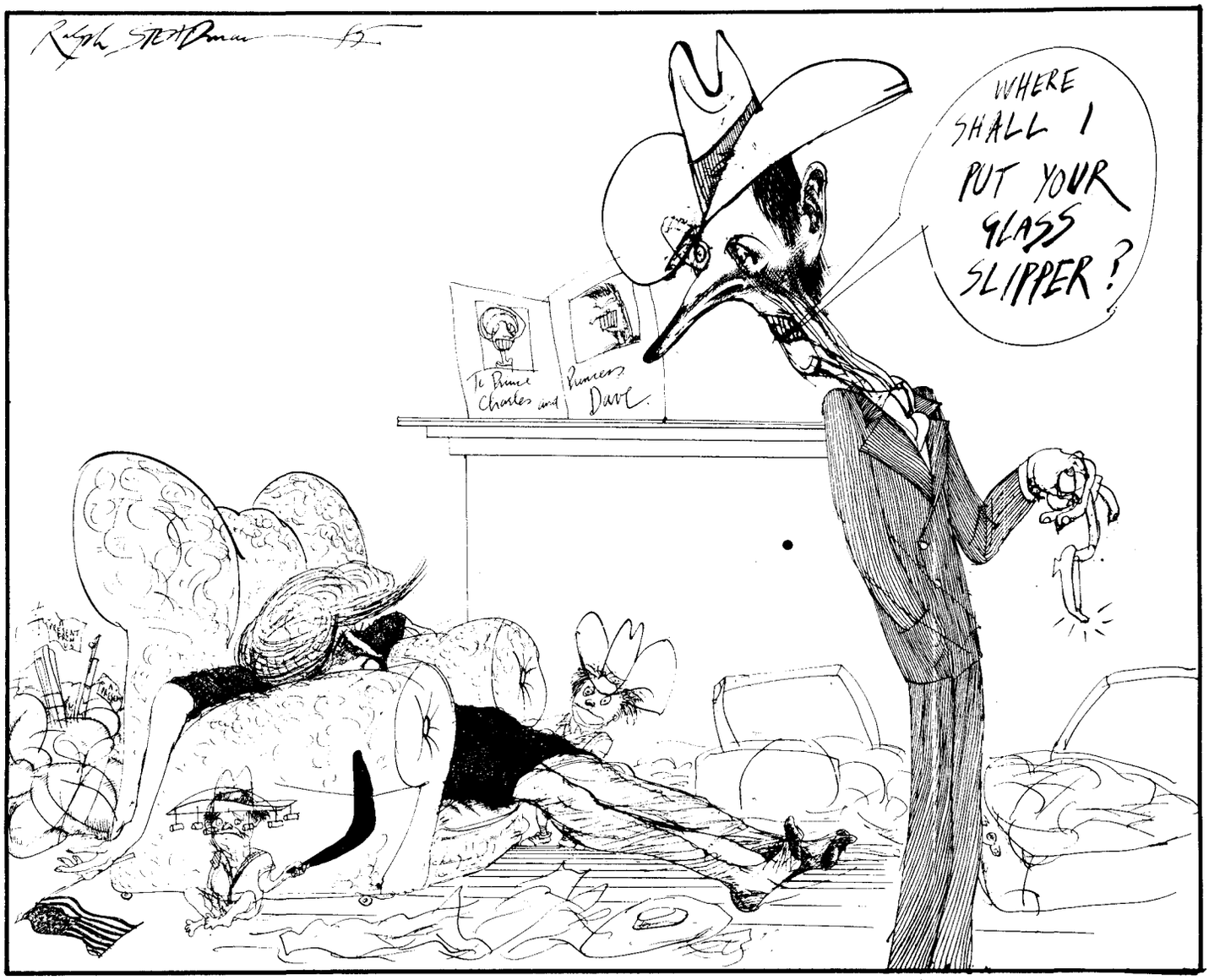
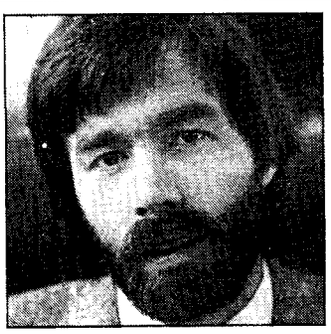


'Pompous about Sunday shopping'



Chris Hill

People are getting awfully pompous about Sunday shopping south of Gretna Green. Since the government confirmed its intention in last week's Queen's Speech of abolishing Sunday trading restrictions in England and Wales, pundits, politicians and editorials have pontificated at tedious length about why we should, or should not, welcome the change. Everyone, it seems, has passionate views on the matter. A Tory backbench revolt is even theatened.

In Scotland, where Sunday shopping has long been the norm, there has been barely a flicker of interest in the topic. In fact, after several days of rigorous research, in-depth interviews, and careful thought I have come to a conclusion which I suspect most Scots know instinctively: the matter is hardly worth thinking about.

The only time curiosity was vaguely stirred was when Edinburgh's cavernous new Cameron Toll shopping centre was flooded on the second Sunday it was meant to open. Unprecedented rainfall had caused a nearby stream to burst its banks, and there were visions of red peppers, record albums and plastic basins bobbing aimlessly through the centre, newly transformed into an indoor loch.

I think the only reason the event was mildly interesting was because it tended to confirm the ramblings of the 'wrath of God' theorists. Along with lightning striking York Minster and Aids, the flooding of Cameron Toll was obviously a message from our alleged maker. A message which, for better or for worse, has been completely ignored.

The banks of the stream have been strengthened, and last Sunday, like every Sunday, Cameron Toll was mobbed. Cars queued around roundabouts to get in and out and thousands of glazed-eyed families queued at every counter and checkout. Most of them looked pretty miserable, but then people out shopping always seem to look miserable — especially when they are wandering around a place like Cameron Toll, a huge black steel and glass canopy rimmed with red neon looking like it has just landed on southeast Edinburgh from *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

I was there partly in the services of investigative journalism and partly to buy an ironing board. I can report that after about an hour my skilled search party located and purchased the required item, plus a digital watch, a solar calculator, three blank cassettes, five oranges and some paracetamol. I can think of better ways of spending time and money and I can think of worse. What I cannot understand is why anyone anywhere should get at all worked up about it.

Sabbatarians apart, there are four arguments put up against Sunday shopping south of the border: staff will suffer, small shopkeepers will be forced out of business, prices will go up and something sacred about Sunday will be destroyed. According to the director of the Scottish Consumer Council, Peter Gibson: 'There is not the itsy-bitsiest teeny-weeniest bit of evidence to support any of these claims in Scotland'.

If shopkeepers want to open on a Sunday, they do. If people want to go shopping on a Sunday, they do. If they want to wash the car, go for a walk, go to church, read the Sunday papers, or stay in bed, they do. So when the *Observer* mourns the passing of the 'old Scottish Sunday', I'm at a loss to know what it is going on about.

The fact that you can go out and buy virtually anything on a Sunday is marginally useful. The fact that you still cannot buy beer, wine or whisky to take away in Scotland is slightly annoying (how many of us have turned up shame-faced at Sunday dinner parties clutching a carton of orange juice?). And if anybody in Scotland is losing sleep over the fact that they cannot legally get a professional haircut on a Sunday, their torment will soon be ended. In one of the most important measures the Tories are planning for Scotland this Parliamentary session, this heinous restriction on liberty is going to be swept away. I can't wait.

Rob Edwards

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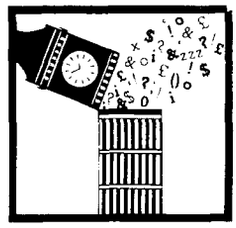

Neil Kinnock begins to shape the tools of freedom

FROM TIME TO TIME this column has reluctantly had to ask what is Neil Kinnock's purpose in politics. The immediate answer is obvious enough: he wants to become Prime Minister. But then what? Does he have a vision of the kind of socialist society he wants to create? Does he have a strategy for getting there? We know quite a lot about what he is against: Mrs Thatcher, the two Davids, Militant and Arthur Scargill. But what is he *for?*

This week we have begun to find out. On Tuesday evening Kinnock delivered the first of a series of Fabian lectures on the future of socialism. Predictably, the immediate publicity concentrated on the second half of Kinnock's speech and his assault on Militant. But in the longer run it is the first half of his speech, on socialist values, which is likely to prove more important.

In some ways it was a curiously derivative speech. I say 'curiously' because Kinnock seemed to be reaching for a fresh synthesis of socialist ideas and practice; yet he deployed echoes from the past — quotes from Dickens, Orwell, Tawney, Cole and Bevan — to make many of his points. Indeed, one of the key quotations, from Orwell, was also used in Kinnock's previous major excursion into socialist theory, in his John Mackintosh lecture in July 1983. Then, as now, he quoted Orwell's description in 1937 of socialism as 'a diamond hidden under a mountain of dung' — the dung of 'doctrinaire priggishness, party squabbles and half-baked progressivism'.

It is a strong and apposite metaphor. But efforts to convey originality of thought are not enhanced by the repeated use of the same 48-year-old quotation.

The substance of Kinnock's speech seemed at first sight as derivative as his quotations. He spoke at length of the emancipating powers of the State and of the communal provision of services such as health and education. Despite occasional asides commending local co-operative and decentralised provision, the essence of his argument was directed at the State as a national entity guaranteeing national standards.

His theoretically central, if verbally convoluted, statement came when he asserted that with the supply by the State

> of the personal services of opportunity, learning, care, security and employment, the co-operative and collective action of limiting liability for immediate payment by providing collective and co-operative contribution has been the greatest single source of individual emancipation of our century.

If you can penetrate the awkward syntax of that remark, you can see its force. Kinnock was confronting head-on the heartland of Thatcherite ideology: the belief that the State cannot properly or efficiently allocate resources among individuals, who will be better off left to their own devices and their own voluntary arrangements. In Kinnock's view, 'collective provision has not been the enemy of individual freedom, it has been the agent of individual emancipation.'

Here Kinnock came close to, but shied away from, exploring the full logic of his argument. At another point in his speech he referred to individual freedom as the core of democratic socialism:

> The means which democratic socialism has chosen to protect that freedom are equality and democracy. Just as freedom unqualified by law leaves the weak unprotected from violence, so freedom unqualified by democracy and equality leaves the weak unprotected from power.

PETER KELLNER

AGAIN, THAT WAS a powerful statement left hanging in mid-air, almost as if Labour's leader was afraid to follow where the argument might lead. This column does not share the constraints that Kinnock faces. It does not have to carry the shadow cabinet, or stitch up votes on the national executive, or contrive deals with union leaders to secure their block votes at conference time. So let us tread on a few of the egg-shells that Kinnock studiously avoided, and follow his own logic a little further than he did on Tuesday evening.

Kinnock's concept of democratic socialism hinges on the definition of freedom. Stripped to essentials the Thatcherite definition concerns the right of people to do more or less what they want, constrained only by the rule of law. It is a passive definition of freedom: how people use it, and the practical opportunities they have to use it, are no business of the government.

A democratic socialist definition of freedom is more interventionist: not in the sense of imposing bureaucratic order (Kinnock made clear his distaste for the way socialism is so often 'parodied by its association with an uncaring bureaucracy') but in actively using State power to make sure that people acquire the *tools of freedom.*

The tools of freedom are many and varied. They involve the right to vote — for MPs, councillors, union officials and company managers, the right to say unpopular things without being arrested by the police or howled down by opponents, freedom from racial and sexual oppression, access to adequate education and health care, decent housing, sufficient food, and so on.

The list may be varied or extended according to taste. The point is that this kind of freedom is in practice a complex phenomenon; and it requires the active involvement of the State — new laws, public spending and a redistributionist tax system — to make sure that people both possess the tools of freedom and have the confidence to use them.

To state all this ought to be to state the obvious. Yet such is the defensiveness of the Left that it seems to fly in the face of contemporary fashion. The New Right has succeeded in stealing the rhetoric of freedom for two main reasons.

The first is that it has managed to divert attention (with help from an intellectually lethargic Left) from the age-old fact that the *laisser-faire* concept of freedom leads those who start with money and privilege to corner the tools of freedom and to reinforce their own power. A particular example of the Left's failure lies in its attitude to anti-trust, or monopolies, legislation. Tough anti-trust laws to prevent the concentration of economic power ought to lie at the heart of the Left's industrial policy. Yet its suspicion of private ownership as such means that too much attention is paid to public-ownership pipe-dreams, and too little to more achievable ways of dispersing economic power.

The second great success of the New Right has been to discredit the State as an agent for benevolence. The Right has sold to millions of people the concept that privatisation will lead to a better, cheaper, more responsive service. Poor health care? Encourage private medical schemes. Unhappy with your children's school? Vouchers, which could be used to offset private school fees, will give you more choice. Run-down inner-city council estates? Sell them off to property developers.

Through this argument runs the strand that communal provision is inefficient and limits choice. This can only be answered by admitting that the accusation has in the past had some force and that new means of providing public services need to be — and in the case of some councils have been — devised.

Kinnock's text provides encouraging evidence that he acknowledges each of these points in isolation. What he failed to do was incorporate them fully into a properly integrated concept of democratic socialism.

Does this matter? Walter Lippmann once wrote that Franklin Roosevelt had a second-rate intellect but a first-rate character. However, Lippmann argued, Roosevelt could still be an outstanding President, for intellectual power can be purchased, but there is little anyone can do to make up for deficiencies in a political leader's character. The same observation applies to Kinnock today. He has a first-rate character, but he has not yet tapped sufficient intellectual power. He has time to fill this gap, but not much. □

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AND AT THE END OF THE DAY WHO IS HOLDING THE BABY?

Since their defeat over the Corrie anti-abortion bill in 1979 at the start of the Thatcher years the 'New Right' have boxed increasingly clever over their use of administrative action and the embryo research controversy to erode women's hard-won *partial* rights to terminate pregnancy. And now the Right, as JULIA SOUTH describes, sail under apparently piratical colours of feminism

'OF ALL THINGS which are done to women in order to fit them into a society dominated by men, abortion is the most bloody, violent and degrading invasion of their physical and psychic integrity'.

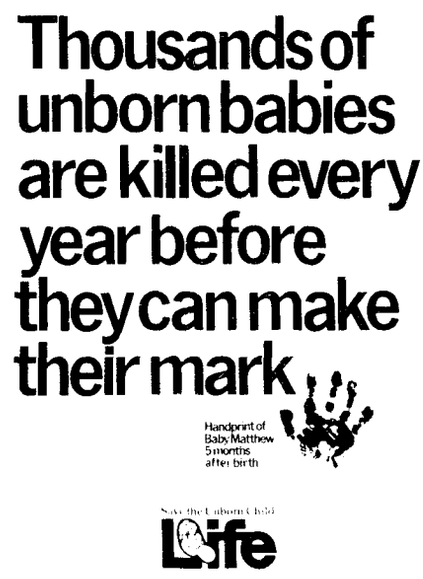
Have anti-abortionists discovered feminism, or is this their usual mixture of half-truth and opportunism, only in a new disguise? The quote is from *Abortion: the Feminist Sell Out*, a leaflet put out by the anti-abortion organisation 'Life' (*see box*). On its back cover is depicted a large and powerful fist, clenched so tightly it is crushing to pieces a women's liberation symbol within it. Elsewhere, 'Women for Life' describe as a main area of concern 'trying to win over some of the many radicals and others who support abortion on demand because they think it is part of the struggle for liberation'.

It is almost six years since the last parliamentary confrontation over abortion. Then the Corrie anti-abortion Bill was defeated due to massive opposition. Now politics have shifted, tactics have changed. But what of the struggle for hearts and minds over the abortion issue? Are radicals being won over?

The defeat of the Corrie Bill in July 1979 marked a humiliating failure for anti-abortionists. Individuals and organisations alike agreed that the time was not right for a parliamentary restriction on abortion. Opposition was too solid. Another way had to be found. 'Corrie by the backdoor' is how it's come to be known.

Attacks on abortion rights quite as serious as those contained in the Corrie Bill would be attempted, only they would not entail parliamentary debate. Every opportunity would be used to reduce the availability of abortion and to challenge the climate of pro-choice feeling. Crucially, these attacks would no longer take place so much in the public eye.

The 1967 Abortion Act has always been vulnerable to subversion. However little known this fact may be, abortion is *still* illegal in Britain. All the 1967 Act allows is certain exceptions to this, when a woman may be given an abortion at the discretion of two doctors. Ostensibly, it is left to the doctors' 'clinical judgment' to decide whether or not a woman qualifies, though the judgment is often a moral one. 'They liked to be in a position of authority, and often enjoyed "turning a woman down",' writes gynaecologist Dr Wendy Savage, referring to the consultants with whom she worked when she first trained.


Thousands of unborn babies are killed every year before they can make their mark
Handprint of Baby Matthew 5 months after birth
Life

A series of posters from 'Life' offer images to pull at the heartstrings

Outrageously, comparable doctors may simultaneously have been encouraging, pressing or even coercing other women into having abortions. These would be women they deemed unworthy of motherhood, women who do not conform enough to the stereotype of white, middle-class, able-bodied and young. Doctors share the racism and classism and prejudices of our society. The 1967 Act, by emphasising the authority and discretion of doctors, allows them to express these freely in the realm of abortion.

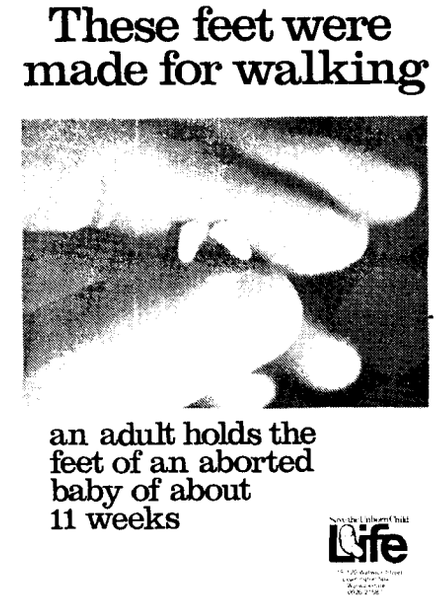
The doctors' power is further protected by the 'conscience clause'. As part of the 1967 Act any nurse or doctor is allowed, for religious or moral reasons, to opt out of work involving abortion. This is controversial, because abortion is the only medical procedure where moral scruples are recognised. Nurses and doctors cannot have conscientious objections to other aspects of health care — electric shock treatment, for example.

Abortion is singled out in a particular way which invites distaste and objection. Of course it is clearly for the best that women are as little as possible in the hands of unsympathetic staff while having abortions; and health workers have rights too. But this is not what the 'conscience clause' is about. Essentially, it is about providing immunity for doctors to deny women abortion.

ANTI-ABORTIONISTS are always first to bemoan the lack of ethics in obstetrics and gynaecology; not that they have ever concerned themselves with racist practices or with the abuse some women suffer in being coerced into abortions. Since Corrie, the anti-abortionists' have in fact focused on the 'conscience clause', publicising it as widely as possible to health workers. Their aim is to prevent as many abortions as possible, irrespective of the feelings of the women concerned.

A great deal of the publicity is directed at nurses, who are encouraged to report on any 'incidents' concerning abortion. The anti-abortionists then sensationalise in order to provoke more anti-abortion feeling. During and immediately after Corrie, there was a rash of 'horror stories' about foetuses allegedly surviving late abortion and then dying without attention. Most of these stories were later entirely discredited by official enquiries; long after the damage was done.

Be it conscience or caprice on the part of a doctor, there is still, as matters stand, no redress for a woman refused an abortion. We have no 'right' to one under the 1967 Act. There are no



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official figures for women turned away. Our knowledge of women's struggles to obtain abortions come from hearsay and word of mouth. The only figures that do tell us something are those for deaths from illegal abortion. Appallingly, it still happens here. The NHS only carries out 46 per cent of all legal abortions, and the price of a charity clinic abortion is now around £125 up to 13 weeks. In Merseyside alone, since the 1967 Act was passed, three women are known to have died as a result of a criminal abortion.

Crucially, even after she has obtained a referral from her GP, a woman is still a long way from having her abortion. A study published last year by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists revealed that there is sometimes a delay of *eight weeks or more* between being referred and having the operation*.

This is scandalous. Early abortion is known to be much safer and simpler. Waiting lists have a knock-on effect as well, of course. Guy's Hospital in London recently announced that it is turning women away for abortions who are over 12 weeks pregnant — part of the reason being that Guy's now sees patients whom Lewisham Hospital will not take. Meanwhile the South London Hospital for Women is closed down entirely. Whether or not they are orchestrated deliberately, the cuts are helping the anti-abortion cause.

IF ALL THIS were not enough, the entire political climate since 1979 has moved to the side of the anti-abortionists, though Nuala Scarisbrook, applying in 1984 on behalf of 'Life' for a government grant of £476,000 (a 100 per cent increase) to expand its 'pregnancy care service', was refused, presumably on monetarist grounds. She was quoted as saying it would be distressing if this government in particular were unresponsive, given Mrs Thatcher's insistence on family values.

Margaret Thatcher supported Victoria Gillick and her fight for a judicial ruling outlawing contraception and abortion to the under-16s without parental consent — denied by the Lords on 17 October. The new moral Right is enjoying a new found respectability and favour. In the recent cabinet reshuffle, Barney Hayhoe, avowed anti-abortionist and moral rightwinger, replaced the more liberal Kenneth Clarke as the latest minister of health.

Indeed it was under a previous anti-abortion minister of health, Gerard Vaughan (1979-82) that anti-abortionists achieved perhaps their biggest backdoor coup. This was in 1982, when the DHSS form which doctors sign to authorise an abortion was altered to exclude the 'social grounds' clause. Abortions could until then be legally performed under this clause if a woman's social circumstances were such that her health would be affected were she to have a baby. In the year before the change, 120,000 of the 140,000 abortions performed had been authorised under this clause. Now all abortions had to be for strictly medical reasons.

The DHSS made out at the time that the change in the form was purely an administrative

Isn't this a human rights issue, too ?
Six unborn children killed under the 1967 Abortion Act
The youngest was about 8 weeks gestation
The oldest about 25 weeks.
Save the Unborn Child
Life
Human rights begin at conception

improvement. It did not require parliamentary approval as it was introduced, or slipped in, under Statutory Instrument. Though there was uproar at the time as pro-choice politicians and health workers recognised the attack this represented on the 1967 Act and on abortion rights, the storm blew over. Pro-choice doctors have continued to authorise abortion as before, or they simply write 'depression' as the medical reason. But the form, though not the law, now lacks the 'social clause'.

Doctors who are qualifying today may never know that it is legal to allow abortion on 'social grounds'. Other doctors may find the absence of a category for 'social grounds' on the form enough to inhibit them allowing abortion for these reasons. The introduction of the new 'buff form' was a moral and political victory for anti-abortionists. There was little organised opposition to it. Unlike a parliamentary bill, it is difficult to raise mass support on the basis of a line change in a form which the public anyway never sees. Anti-abortionists had learnt.

NOW, WHAT BETTER rallying point for anti-abortionists than the new reproductive technology? Of course they are concerned with the technology in its own right. Some 'right-to-lifers' oppose *any* interference in the 'natural' process of conception and birth. More important still, however, are the ethical decisions made in this field; and the openings these represent for the anti-abortion cause.

The very title of Enoch Powell's Unborn Children (Protection) Bill gave away its anti-abortion intentions. Defeated this May, on the surface the Bill was simply an attempt to outlaw embryo research by giving the embryo protection in law and the status of a person. Anti-abortionists were anxious to establish such law before any government legislation might be based on the Warnock Report, which recommended research up to 14 days. The supporters of the Powell Bill did not spell out its implications for abortion, which of course are horrifying. If the embryo is given the status of a person and protected by law, what then is the legal position in performing an abortion? ▷

LOGGERHEADS

IN THE 'PRO LIFE' LOBBY

Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC). 7 Tufton Street, London SW1. 01-222 5845. 31,000 members.

Life. 118/120 Warwick Street, Leamington Spa CV32 4QY. 0926 21587. Organiser: Nuala Scarisbrook. Founded 1970 by her husband. 30,000 members. 252 local branches in UK, branches in Gibraltar, Malta and Southern Ireland. 78 offices in UK offering free pregnancy/advice service. 66 houses in UK accommodating 450 women (av. stay 12 months) who are homeless pregnant women or unsupported mothers. Collected 1.6 of the 2 million signatures in support of the Powell Bill.

Women for Life. 15 Croydon Road, Penge, London SE20 7TJ 01-659 4340. Founder/organiser: Debby Sanders. 500 members. Completely separate from **Life.** Self-described as the radical feminist part of the Pro-Life movement. Seeks non-violent solutions to all human problems; provides help for women who have abortions and education on abortion.

Disabled Women for Life. 'Rosemary', 6 Green Lane, Parsons Heath, Colchester, Essex. 0206 864601. Joint founders: Alison Davis, Debby Sanders. Newly formed so no membership figs. yet. Open to anyone whether disabled or not. Campaigning for right to life for disabled/mentally handicapped and to point out danger of some medical tests to the foetus.

Pro-Life Lawyers Group. 32 Ravine Road, Bournemouth, Dorset. 0202 429176. Founder/organiser: Michael Bell. Association of Lawyers for Defence of the Unborn. 1500 members, both barristers & solicitors.

IN THE 'PRO-CHOICE' LOBBY

Women's Reproductive Rights Information Centre. 52-54 Featherstone St, London EC1. 01-251 6332. 500 members.

National Abortion Campaign. 70 Great Queen St, Kingsway, WC2B 5AX 01-405 4801. 350 members — half organisations, half individuals. (nb: at Nov. '84 when 50 per cent up on March 1975 when founded.)

Abortion Law Reform Assoc. (ALRA). 88a Islington High St., London N1. 01-359 5200. 700 members, individuals & orgs.

Labour Abortion Rights Campaign (LARC). P.O. Box 110, London SE21 8NO.

Doctors for a Woman's Choice on Abortion. (DWCA). Dr Linda Benson, 101 Burbage Rd, London SE24. 01-388 7011 × 236. 600 members.

RALLYING POINTS 1979-85

Corrie Bill. John Corrie MP's Abortion (Amendment) Bill, 13 July 1979, defeated 242 — 98.

Warnock Report. DHSS report of the Committee of Enquiry into Human Fertilisation & Embryology, chaired by Dame Mary Warnock, Cmnd 9314 publ. 18 July 1984.

Powell Bill. Enoch Powell MP's Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, filibustered out May 1985.

Gillick. Petition by Mrs Victoria Gillick to outlaw contraception and abortion for under 16s without parental consent lost in High Court July 1983; won in Court of Appeal December 1983; lost in Lords September 1985 following DHSS appeal.

*Publication (in text) 'Late Abortion in England & Wales. Pub. Jan. 1984. £2.50 from Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, 27 Sussex Place, London NW1 01-262 5425.

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Potentially, all abortion could end up banned.

The Powell Bill had strong support in all parties and would certainly have passed, had it not been filibustered. Now there are a number of MPs who would be prepared to put their names in the hat for a private member's bill on the same issue, despite the immense public pressures they would be subjected to. The danger is not over.

Embryo research is in itself an emotional subject. Anti-abortionists rely on opposition being divided when feelings about it run high. They know they can rouse such an emotional response in people that the real thrust of their attack – against women's rights to abortion – can go almost unnoticed.

This is clearly true of the new time limits ruling. This July the DHSS announced a new code of conduct regarding late abortion. Clinics will be under threat of losing their licences if they do abortions after 24 weeks pregnancy. The change has been made because representatives of the British Medical Association (BMA) are now arguing that viability is no longer the old date of 28 weeks, but 24 (viability being the time at which a foetus is thought to be capable of sustaining independent life).

Importantly — given the difficulties for doctors of being entirely certain of the date of conception — the new time limit means abortions will in fact not be performed after *20* weeks, in case there has been a mistake. *Now* the only reason a woman can have an abortion after this point is if her own life is in danger, although it is believed that some exceptions may also be made on the grounds of foetal abnormality.

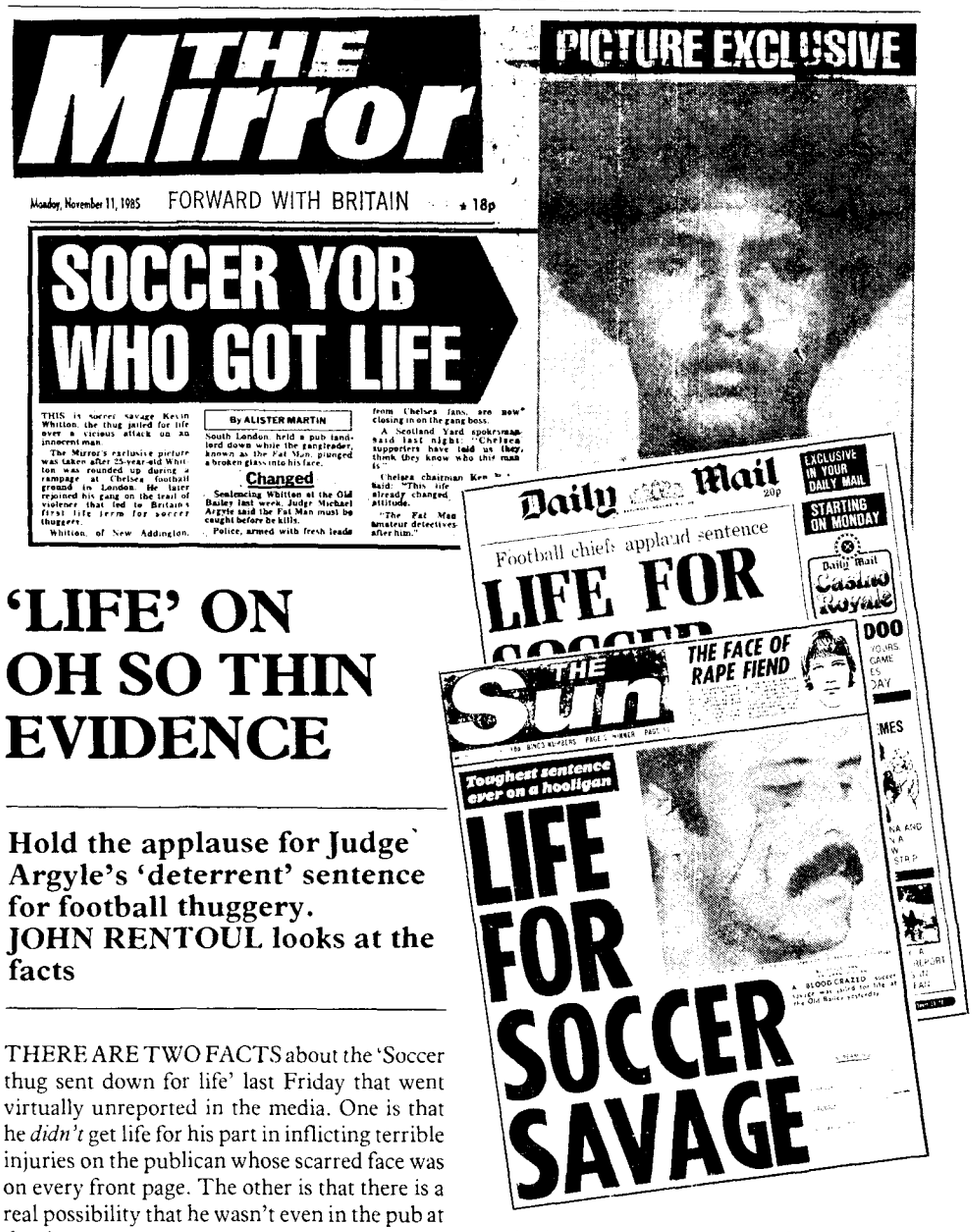
Whether or not one believes in late abortion, one has to be wary of what is going on here. The numbers of late abortions are very small: 1-1.5 per cent of the total number of abortions performed. Why do they happen? Firstly, because of delays in the system, waiting lists and obstructive doctors. Secondly, because of delays in the woman herself recognising and acknowledging the pregnancy, then plucking up the courage to go to the doctor. Thirdly, because of foetal abnormality, only detected later in pregnancy.

Late abortion is distressing, for the woman and for the health workers involved. It is crucial that the nurses and doctors performing these late abortions are given support, and work in the field voluntarily. But we must be wary of what is also at stake in this shortening of the time limit: it will affect many more than the 1-1.5 per cent of current abortions. Viability is not a fixed point. The technology is developing fast. The date of viability is now put at 24 weeks. With medical 'breakthroughs' when will it shorten again? In time it is quite feasible that gestation will be possible outside the womb entirely, at any point from conception onwards.

What then of a woman's right to choose an abortion? The July change in the time limit was made without any parliamentary or public debate, without any vote to change the law. The DHSS rules OK? □

Julia South lives in Liverpool and is active in feminist and anti-imperialist campaigns

Next week: Anti-abortion sentiment and what it is to be pro-choice



'LIFE' ON OH SO THIN EVIDENCE

Hold the applause for Judge Argyle's 'deterrent' sentence for football thuggery. JOHN RENTOUL looks at the facts

THERE ARE TWO FACTS about the 'Soccer thug sent down for life' last Friday that went virtually unreported in the media. One is that he *didn't* get life for his part in inflicting terrible injuries on the publican whose scarred face was on every front page. The other is that there is a real possibility that he wasn't even in the pub at the time.

Kevin Whitton was sentenced to life imprisonment for 'waving his fist in a menacing fashion, and lashing out with his feet'. This was enough to constitute 'riot', outside Chelsea football ground on 29 December 1984. The only witness was a policeman, who arrested him because he 'feared a breach of the peace', according to his statement. Whitton says he was only asked to move on and he refused.

The pub manager's face, which dominated media coverage, was slashed 8 hours later in a separate incident, for which Whitton got 10 years for grievous bodily harm and a concurrent 8 years for 'affray'.

The life sentence is a legal aberration, likely to be quashed on appeal. Well-known for his eccentric judgments (see box), Judge Argyle was presumably expressing distaste for football hooligans in general.

But even Whitton's conviction for the *second* incident, which the media focused on, rested on a single identification. The crucial evidence that Whitton was in the pub that evening was obtained when a customer identified him in an informal identification parade on an escalator in Sloane Square tube station. The police say they couldn't arrange a proper identification parade for 'lack of persons of similar description to the suspect'. Whitton was the only black man on the escalator.

The customer, Nick Myles, said in court that he was no longer sure that Whitton was the man in the pub at the time of the brawl, and he was unhappy about the way the identification had been carried out — a police officer had given him a description beforehand.

The evidence that the black man in the pub actually *held* the manager while his face was being slashed was contained in a statement made by the manager, Neil Hansen, 10 months after the attack (the day before the trial), but not in the statement he made two days after the attack.

The only other evidence that Whitton was there was his 'confession'. Three weeks after the incidents he was interviewed by the police. While his solicitor was present, a 'record of interview' was signed by him in which he denied having been in the pub, saying he had gone home after being arrested and released on bail for the first incident outside Chelsea football ground.

In court the police produced a version of

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another interview later the same day in which Whitton confessed to being in the pub and holding the manager while the 'fat man' was 'doing his face with a glass'. His solicitor was not present, Whitton did not sign the statement and has always denied this second interview took place.

THOSE ARE THE FACTS. This is how they were reported.

'A blood-crazed soccer savage was jailed for life at the Old Bailey yesterday' (*Sun*). 'Chelsea fan Kevin Whitton, 25, was convicted of riot and assault on a pub landlord who had a broken beer glass smashed repeatedly into his face' (*Mirror*). Both on the front page, with a picture of Hansen's scarred face. Inside, reports on a third incident, when the 'fat man' bit off someone's ear on a bus, immediately after the pub brawl — Whitton was not accused of being involved in this incident in any way.

The events giving rise to the convictions for 'riot and assault' were 8 hours apart; the way the tabloids reported them they were all part of a continuous violent melee, with Whitton a leading member of the gang.

Television news the night before also got it seriously wrong. The BBC's *Nine O'Clock News* said Whitton had been 'convicted of rioting and assault *after* a match between Chelsea and Manchester United' (our emphasis). The picture of Hansen used over a telephone interview was linked to the life sentence, and followed by: 'Whitton was also sentenced to 8 years on another charge of affray and 10 years for grievous bodily harm.'

ITV's *News At Ten* started off correctly, saying Whitton got 'life for riotous behaviour . . . [and] also got 10 years for wounding the manager of a Chelsea pub,' although the distinction was somewhat lost in the on-the-spot report outside the Henry J Beans pub.

The *Star*, *Mail* and *Express* focused on the jubilant response of the law and order lobby (which on this occasion included the Labour front bench), with the former trumpeting: 'AT LAST the law gets tough.'

Media coverage was topped out this week by the *Mirror*'s 'picture exclusive' on Monday, with these misleading words: 'This is the soccer savage Kevin Whitton, the thug jailed for life over a vicious attack on an innocent man.' Although convicted of 'assaulting persons unknown' under the riot charge, no complaint of assault was ever made.

HOW DID THIS sort of reporting happen? It wasn't until the following Monday (11 November) that Anne Sofer in *The Times* pointed out the worrying aspects of the case. Part of the problem is that there were very few reporters in court — the case appeared to be fairly trivial — until the announcement of the sentence, when the court suddenly filled up with journalists, and television cameras miraculously appeared outside.

Partly it was a response to the hysteria about law and order which was inflamed by the inner city riots, but which the government started off to set the scene for its Public Order Act — which ironically abolishes the old offence of riot for which Whitton got a life sentence and brings in a new offence with a 10-year maximum sentence. □

Judge Michael Argyle's record

1966 Caused controversy by appearing to advocate life sentences for burglary
1971 Jailed three editors of underground *Oz* magazine in obscenity trial, sentences quashed on appeal
1983 Freed a barman who attempted to rape a woman, saying: 'You come from Derby, which is my part of the world. Now off you go.'

FANCY!

1983 Condemned football violence when sentencing five men involved in a fight in which John Dickinson was killed: **the heaviest sentence was one year**

1983 Upset jury by directing to acquit Hell's Angel of rape when defence offered no corroboration of victim's evidence
1983 Attacked by John McVicar in video magazine *Private Spy* for relying too much on verbal evidence from suspects allegedly 'fitted up'
1984 Told off by Lord Justice May for approaching defence lawyers and jury offering non-costodial sentence for guilty pleas, in breach of Appeal Court guidelines
1985 Hit headlines earlier this year by finding a job for unemployed Everton Samuels, given a suspended sentence on a minor cannabis charge
1985 Kevin Whitton trial
Judge Argyle intends to retire at Christmas

"TOO LATE FOR TALKING!"

Michael Palin

"Everyone, myself included, talks a lot about the scandal and tragedy of World Hunger. Now, with Oxfam's national Fast for change, we all have the chance even in a small way to do more than just talk."

Michael Palin is hungry for change and he is part of a growing movement. Thousands of people from all walks of life are setting aside **just one day** to go without food in what promises to be a massive expression of sympathy with the poor and anger with governments who allow world hunger to grow in a world of plenty.

The signs are that **Oxfam's second Hungry For Change Fast** is going to be a big one. Advance support has surpassed all our expectations.

The entire staff of BBC Radio One have decided to give over one day — Nov. 15 in support of the Fast. Commitments from leading politicians, actors, entertainers and sports personalities are flooding into our offices.

Apart from the thousands of individual fasts, many major towns in the UK are preparing organised events in church halls and schools.

Weight of numbers is now all important and so we urge you, if you are considering taking part in the Fast **please register today!**

Time is running out.

FAST WITH OXFAM THIS WEEKEND
FOR FAST DETAILS PHONE 01–993 0366

☐ **I'm supporting OXFAM'S second Hungry for Change FAST**
☐ I'm not able to fast, but send me details of the Hungry for Change campaign.
I enclose a donation of £_____

HUNGRY FOR CHANGE — FAST NOV. 15,16 or 17

Name _____
Address _____
_____ Postcode _____
Send to: Oxfam, Room NS13, FREEPOST, Oxford, OX2 7BR. OXFAM

Oxfam works with poor people in their struggle against hunger, disease, exploitation and poverty in Africa, Asia, Latin-America and the Middle East through relief, development, research and public education.

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THE BANK OF ENGLAND IDLES AWAY THE '80s

The scandal over Johnson Mathey Bankers has again revealed the inadequacy of supervision by the Bank of England. Last week's Queen's Speech promised a new framework of regulation for the City, but the authorities have no understanding of the scale of problem that now faces them, argues CHRISTOPHER MARLEY

SO LONG as banks stick to banking, the essence of the Bank of England's role as supervisor of the banking system is clear. It must try to see that each bank has a prudent control of the 'risk' to which it is exposed in the loans and investments it makes so as to maintain the confidence of depositors in the financial system as a whole and to ensure a continuing free flow of credit. The risk is unique in that banks are allowed to borrow by way of money from depositors as much as twenty times their own equity and other capital resources.

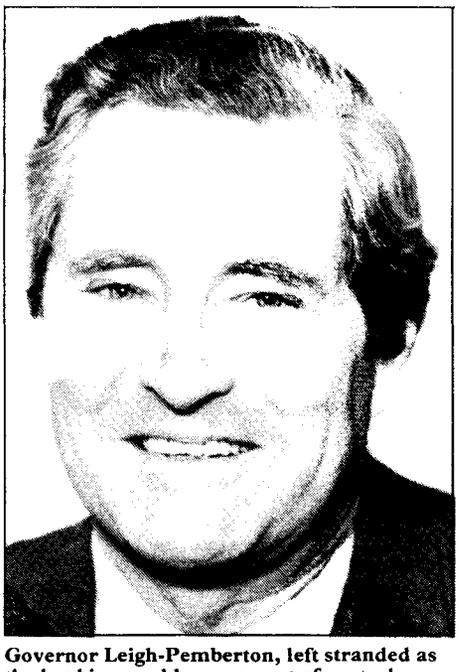
The privilege allowed to banks of having such a high ratio of borrowing to their own capital assumes that stability will be achieved by a bank having its total funds well spread across a whole spectrum of loans and different kinds of investment, with a proportion in easily realisable form. Given that having to write off 5 per cent of a bank's total funds as an unrecoverable loss can wipe out the whole of its capital base, there have of course been notorious periods like the 1930s when even prudent risk control has not been sufficient to prevent economic catastrophe from knocking out banks.

The so called secondary banking crisis in the United Kingdom in the mid-1970s, though, was of a quite different type. It was provoked by a massively imprudent concentration of loans and investment in property, a self-inflicted wound by a new generation of bank managements with no collective memory of bad times like the 1930s, combined with totally inadequate supervision by the Bank of England.

It was that self-inflicted wound that led to the 1979 Banking Act and the attempt at stricter supervision. The concept of 'prudent banking' has since been continuously defined and redefined into quasi-mathematical models and formulae for assessing the various types of risk inherent in borrowing and lending.

None of this, though, adds up to a rigid 'rule book' for banking. There can be no precise arithmetical answers as to what is a reasonable percentage for this or a reasonable ratio for that. Effective supervision consists of looking at the detailed statistics on each bank's balance sheet; asking the occasional *qualitative* rather than just quantitative question and asking it at a relatively low level in the bank's management; and occasionally guiding a bank into some change of its internal policy.

It is clear from all of the current debate about improving supervision and tightening the Banking Act that the authorities are still only thinking in terms of 'more of the same'. We are told that a legal limit may be placed on the percentage of its funds that a bank can lend to any one customer and that auditors' internal reports on a bank's loans should be made available to the Bank of England. Similarly, when the outgoing Deputy Governor of the Bank, Kit McMahon, recently warned the banking system of the dangers of 'diversification', he was talking about the potential pitfalls of trading in exotic new money instruments, like currency 'futures' and 'options'. He was not talking about the dangers of entering an entirely new business world beyond banking.



UPP

Governor Leigh-Pemberton, left stranded as the banking world careers out of control

This attitude to supervision fails entirely to tackle the needs of the 1990s. For it assumes that banks will continue to be banks. But over the last ten years, since the OPEC oil price rises flooded the banking system with petrodollar deposits that had to be recycled, the banks have been lending — to Third World countries or virtually anyone else who wanted to borrow — at steadily decreasing profit margins, to the point where the 'spread' between the interest rates charged to borrowers and that paid to depositors barely covers a bank's overheads and where reduced profits are not enough to absorb the huge bad debts that hang over the system as a whole.

It is true that faced with this situation the banking industry talks glibly about replacing its lost income from interest with other banking business on which it can charge fees. But most of this new 'fee business' is involved in arranging loans. Those loans in the end go into the banks' balance sheets and those fees are in reality not fees but disguised interest payments.

NOW SUDDENLY British banks think that they have seen a new door open for them to a different type of business with temptingly higher levels of profitability. It opened when the authorities decided to break the Stock Exchange's traditional monopoly on trading in securities in the United Kingdom. As a result the whole British banking industry has been reorganising itself by buying up firms of stockbrokers and stock jobbers so that the banks themselves can become a major part of the market in stocks, shares and gilt-edged securities.

Banks have already to a limited extent 'made the market' in foreign currencies, but this is now being extended to trading in all stocks and bonds, domestic and foreign, with the catchment area for potential customers extended to cover investment institutions all over the world. Banks already organise the issuing of new securities in the Stock Exchange and manage large investment portfolios for some international clients. Now, hypnotised by what they see as the potential profitability, they have persuaded themselves that the step from there to actually making the market themselves in securities is both a natural and a necessary extension of their business.

They may be right, but this is an entirely new category of business risk, which will need to be controlled. It is not one with which either the bank managements or the Bank of England are familiar.

A bank that wants to 'make a market' in a security has to carry some substantial amount of the stock on its own books.

Indeed, 'taking a position' in a security, coupled with a secure flow of trading orders from customers, is precisely the attraction of the exercise. The potential profits to be made from getting the trading position consistently right dwarf anything that can be made by dealing in the foreign exchange markets with its narrow profit margins. But, conversely, the potential losses if you get the trading position wrong are equally outside the scale of any past banking experience.

What is an adequate capital base for protecting against loss in this new kind of trading business? Of course, the supervisors have realised that there is a problem. But they don't pretend to have come up with any answers and some of the first steps now being taken look dangerously self-defeating.

For example, it has until now been an article of faith in the British financial system that an authorised bank will not allow any business trading under its name to go under. The bank's 'name' by itself is its stamp of creditworthiness for the rest of the world. But now, encouraged by the Bank of England, the banks are setting up separate subsidiaries to do their market-making business — separately capitalised, separately

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titled, separately and supervised. When the first of these goes bust, will it be allowed to go quietly under, or will the City and public regard the separation as a mirage and start a run on the parent bank?

At the same time, stricter banking supervision and the need for more capital to compete in the new securities business are going to hit the smaller, free-wheeling banks hardest of all. A small bank (and JMB was very small), restricted by rigidly enforced rules governing the spread of its business, will increasingly find itself confined to smaller and riskier customers for its traditional banking. This will lower, not improve, the quality of its loan portfolio. Such institutions will, therefore, inevitably be driven towards taking higher and higher trading risks in the new securities markets in order to survive.

It may be that there is no room for small banks in today's financial markets, but unless there is a wave of enforced mergers, the present policy inevitably means that some smaller banks will in due course perish as spectacularly as JMB.

Meanwhile, large and small banks alike, traditionally cautious in their borrowing and lending business, are poised to change themselves into conglomerate trading houses. For this the financing base provided by their bank deposits, their past internal management experience and the Bank of England's existing machinery for supervision are no longer appropriate. □

Christopher Marley was until recently a director of Guinness Mahon.

NEW LEGISLATION

TAPERED & CAPPED & NOW CHOKED

All this ceaseless interference with local government is just laying up precedents for Thatcher's successors, says TONY TRAVERS

A LOCAL GOVERNMENT Bill now seems to have taken its place alongside the Consolidated Fund Bill and the Finance Bill as an annual Parliamentary event. The latest was published on 7 November.

Like all its recent predecessors, the new Bill is designed to remove a little more of what discretion is left to local government. This time it is the financing of 'publicity' and the funding of capital spending which are to be restricted.

The present government has tapered, targeted, penalised, capped and abolished to such an extent that *another* reorganisation is inevitable from whoever first defeats the Conservatives. But while much of what has been done since 1979 would be undone, seeds of several 'useful' precedents would surely flower.

Neil Kinnock, when Labour's education spokesperson, supported the idea of minimum spending standards for the education service. There have been similar pressures within the Alliance parties. Following the present government's example, it would be easy to set up a grant system to local authorities which would penalise councils for spending *below* a centrally assessed level.

The government has extensively leaked its ideas for local government finance reform, including central control of the non-domestic rate. An incoming Labour government might be very glad to have the power to set the business rates of the City of London, Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea, or any of the other Tory or Independent strongholds with large non-domestic rate bases.

Mrs Thatcher's use of appointed bodies to take over what were previously local government functions is another precedent which Labour or the Alliance might welcome. 'Quangos' allow governments to make changes quickly, whereas putting pressures on local authorities to make reforms may or may not produce results.

When the GLC and metropolitan counties are abolished next April, several of their functions will pass to quangoid 'residuary bodies'. Abolition could not otherwise have occurred so soon. The removal of London Transport from the GLC to central government, under the control of an appointed board, is another example of the quango precedent.

But it is the recent structural reform — abolition itself — which paves the way for all manner of future change. Labour have long had plans to take the biggest towns out of the non-metropolitan counties and recreate county boroughs (ie authorities which provided all local authority services in their area). Indeed, Southampton, Portsmouth, Bristol and others came close to reform following the 1979 White Paper *Organic Change*. The government is about to set the precedent for a reform which introduces such single-tier local government throughout the major cities in England.

RECENTLY, LABOUR politicians have discussed more widespread local government reform. If counties are not needed for London and the metropolitan areas, why should they be necessary in the shire areas? Labour and the Alliance are both moving towards a structure for local government which does away with the non-metropolitan counties. All-purpose districts with a regional tier seems to be the policy which the opposition parties may favour.

There is growing belief in local government that the shires' days are numbered. Yet the shire counties remain the Conservative Party's powerhouse. It would be ironic if Mrs Thatcher's abolition of Labour local authority bastions in 1986 led to the future destruction of her party's roots. There is no doubt that her constant attacks on local government have led to considerable collapse of morale even among Tories in the non-metropolitan counties.

Structural reorganisation of local government by a future non-Conservative government would certainly mean the creation of a new and more powerful London-wide authority. It might just cover the centre of the city (as in Paris) or might be a huge, regional council stretching into Surrey, Essex and the other home counties. The creation by the present government of an elected education authority for the inner London area (the new Inner London Education Authority) covering the old London County Council area may be seen by a future government as a useful stepping stone to a new structure.

Whatever future London-wide council is created, the archaic City of London's days are surely numbered as an independent unit of local government. From April 1986, the City, with its tiny electorate and curious ways, will become an all-purpose authority. While the anomalous position of the City was just about acceptable so long as London had an overall, city-wide authority, it will seem unacceptably strange once the GLC has gone.

A future government might well subsume the City's enormous rateable resources into a new London authority. Alternatively, if the individual London boroughs remain, the City might simply be chopped up between neighbouring Camden, Islington, Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Westminster. What is certain is that the ancient City is under threat as a consequence of what the Thatcher government is doing in 1986.

WHEN IT COMES to pushing through any future local government reforms, what this government has done by way of rushing through block grant, targets, rate capping and abolition will come in handy as precedents. 'Consultation' between the Department of the Environment and local government has become little more than a forum for trading insults. It now usually means that the government sends to local authorities a provisional version of what it actually intends to do, with a note attached stating that the enclosed material is 'consultation'. Rarely are substantive changes made after the consultation process.

But the government's use of the 'doctrine of the mandate' is the most useful precedent for future administrations. During the Parliamentary stages of the Bills to introduce recent controls and structures, Ministers have time and again relied on the government's 'mandate'. The government has argued that its own mandate must override any 'local mandate'.

Moreover, if a policy is in the government's manifesto, it has been deemed unconstitutional for the House of Lords to make changes which alter the substance of legislation. The moral of this for parties entering the next election is to mention in their manifestos any possible changes to local government that they might contemplate.

Most of the possible reforms mentioned above would be as damaging for local government as the changes which have occurred since 1979. Regular and rapid changes to the finance, functions and structure of local government create uncertainty and reduce effectiveness. Kenneth Baker, the Environment Secretary, has shown some early willingness of fight harder than his predecessors for local government. The best thing he could do, both for local government and for his own party's longer term good, would be to give local authorities a quiet period from now till the next election. □

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MEDIA

ITN attacks on the Glasgow front

PHILLIP WHITEHEAD

THE MEDIA studies war is hotting up. Last week an onslaught on the Glasgow Media Group — *TV News: Whose Bias?* — was mounted by Professor Martin Harrison.

The book was accompanied by some breathless publicity material from ITN, who have opened their microfiche records of industrial reporting in the first four months of 1975 to the Professor. He was thus enabled to scrutinise the methodology of *Bad News* as sharply as *it* had criticised the industrial coverage of the BBC and ITN.

Quite why ITN has waited ten years before opening the books in this way is not clear, given its enthusiastic role in promoting the result. (The book is the first published by Policy Journals (Books) Ltd of the Old Vicarage, Hermitage, Berkshire. John Gretton of Policy Journals says that ITN is helping to publicise and distribute the book as a fervour to a small and new publisher . . . 'They were prepared to help us . . .' ITN insists that is 'not an ITN publication'. They have bought one hundred copies.)

Harrison's complaint against the Glasgow Media Group is that its researchers are not 'scholarly'. He produces examples from the scripts now on view to show that they were subjected to highly selective treatment by the Glasgow team, especially if they were 'good news' about the unions. On the best-known example raised in *Bad News* — the Glasgow Dustcart Drivers Strike — Harrison accepts, but plays down, the inability of national television to interview representatives of the strikers:

> While the individual reports were competent and fair, the overall handling of the story could have been more coherent, more comprehensive, and more inquisitive . . . ITN creditably reported what happened; the 'why' was handled less satisfactorily. All the same, there was a greater professionalism to ITN's coverage than to the Glasgow critique of it.

It is that sting in the tail which alarms me. Many of us have been less than ecstatic about the way in which the Glasgow Media Group's research has gone in the past decade. But it did a remarkable job in opening up the debate, initially about industrial reporting, more recently about politics and war. The fact that those criticised found it selective and tendentious was not a reason for ignoring it. Nor is it a reason to dismiss it out of hand now, even if its approach seems simplistic. News coverage of industrial affairs, helped on by Channel 4, has widened because some voices were seen to be excluded — as others still are.

We do not need to believe in some over-arching media conspiracy to see that some views are mightily over-represented in comparison to others. Some assumptions are made about how we respond to powerful shamans in our society which do not bear close examination. Last week, for example, ITN presented on its main news a detailed look at the new-style British bobby, dressed up like a samurai for street warfare. There was an extended piece on the CRS in Paris, approving in tone, which said that of course nothing *quite* like this would be permitted in Britain.

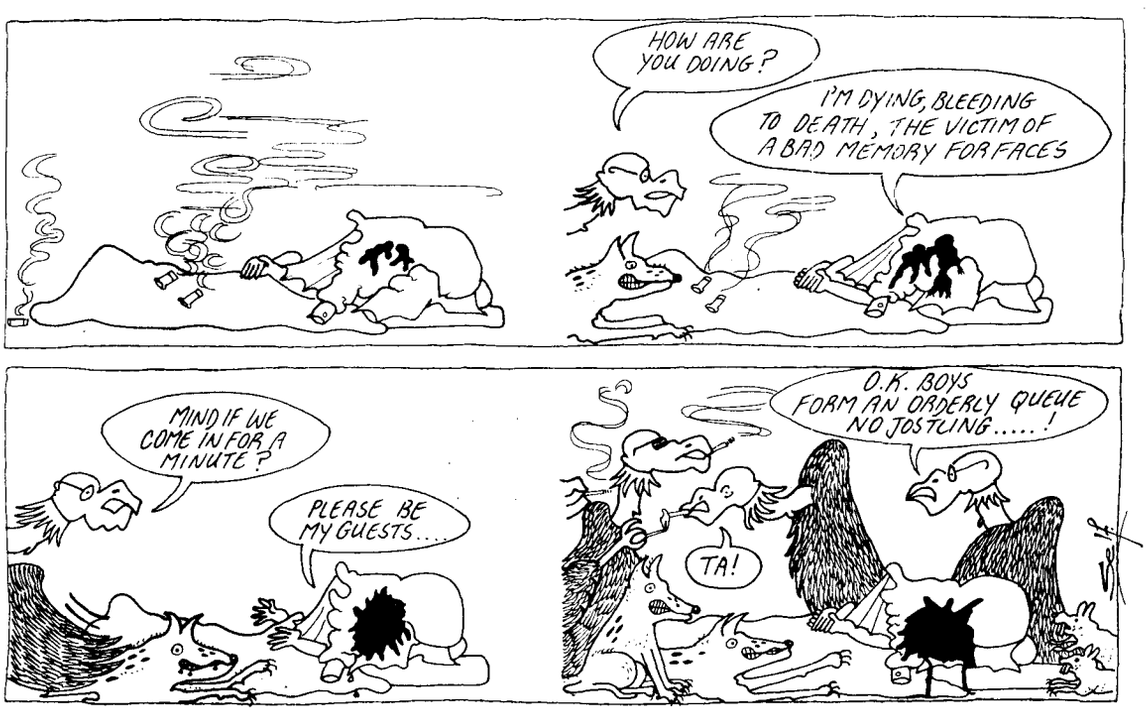
Conspicuously missing was any mention of the multiple anxieties which a heavily armoured para-military policeman sets off in Britain. Yet, as ITN must know, opinion is shaped by how bland and reassuring is the presentation given to a potentially threatening idea.

Not a day goes by without the framework of reference in which 'news' is manufactured can be called into question. It is easy enough to knock the Glasgow Media Group for the shortcomings of its self-styled 'scientific' methods. No doubt a whole new cottage industry will developed as the Glasgow groupies snap back at Harrison. What seems to me a better use of ITN's script records is to open them up on a periodic basis for general discussion by those involved in media studies. The money would be better spent than on the promotion of a war of attrition against one group of media researchers, however irritating the broadcasters have found them.

This wider study of broadcasting realities would have a two-fold advantage. It would help broadcasters to see how extraordinarily narrow their field of vision sometimes is, when they are looking at sensitive areas. Media studies deserve to be taken seriously now and not warded off with a ritual curse and garlic on the windowsill. Nor should broadcasters be complacent at being told they have done a fair job, when set against Glasgow's strictures.

Equally, there are many on the Left who could be pulled clear of the debris of conspiracy theory, if there could be engagement in a real argument. No one who has seen the disastrous consequences of total hostility to the disputes could doubt the need for a better understanding of how a case can be put across. Compare and contrast Kim Howells and A. Scargill over the past year. If ITN has money to burn, some of it could usefully be spent in opening its doors.

If it is true, as reported, that the ITV companies (who jointly own ITN) are to launch a new rival to the *Listener*, one innovation they could usefully make is the periodic review of news scripts, and the professional values and analyses with which they are imbued. □


HOW ARE YOU DOING?
I'M DYING, BLEEDING TO DEATH, THE VICTIM OF A BAD MEMORY FOR FACES
MIND IF WE COME IN FOR A MINUTE?
PLEASE BE MY GUESTS...
O.K. BOYS FORM AN ORDERLY QUEUE NO JOSTLING.....!
TA!

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DIARY

In British political life there are two species whose names have yet to be coined. Each is to be found in all the parties, yet their difference is fundamental.

There are those who think that we can and in some way should return to the days of all-party consensus, and there are others who believe that the long arch from Baldwin to Callaghan is past resurrection. The latter hold that Thatcherism marks a watershed in 20th century life for Britain: from mass unemployment to feminism, from the collapse of manufacturing to the riots, from the fall of the BBC to the rise of the SDP — in all respects an epoch is over. Its symbol will be the construction of a tunnel or bridge to continental Europe. I belong to this group.

○

The point is not whether the consensus days of 1945 and after were preferable, you see, but whether, like Humpty Dumpty, they have collapsed in a great fall. In which case, all the King's horses, and all the Prince's architectural consultants, will not be able to put them back together again.

Nor is it an accident, to use an old phrase, that Charles wants to suture the wounds of Thatcherism. For the monarchy was the keystone in the arch of consensus, which blended change with the continuing order. Since the first female Prime Minister took office, attitudes towards the Queen and her family have been transformed — proof that a period is coming to an end. Leave aside the open derision at Prince Andrew's sausages. Take Peter McKay's complaint from America in this week's *Mail on Sunday:*

> Thanks to the perception of our royals as glitzy figureheads of a decaying Ruritania, Britain is being mocked here and our 'special relationship' with America portrayed as a joke.

A new tension is evident when the role of the monarcy comes under such aggressive scrutiny. Early in 1984 Enoch Powell anathematised Elizabeth Windsor's praise of multi-racialism. Now Diana Windsor is emerging as part of the problem rather than the solution for the Royal Family. In *A Hundred Years of Royal Fashion,* Colin McDowell has argued, in effect, that it is impossible for a future queen to be street-wise. The number of serious assessments of the Crown is another sign that its grip if not its skirt is slipping. Phillip Hall, who revealed Princess Michael's fascistic antecedents, is working away, while Tom Nairn *promises* that he is just about to finish his study, which I predict will make republicanism intellectually respectable. Its title has been baptised publicly — already. My nephew was unable to boycott a visit by Di to his college. As he passed the sycophantic cheering he raised his arm in protest, not against either the crowd or the Princess so much as the entire spectacle, and shouted: 'The glamour of backwardness! The glamour of backwardness!'.

○

I took Bob Borosage, the head of Washington's Institute for Policy Studies, to have lunch with Ken Livingstone last week. Ken was rather down, I though: dispirited as well as tired by the prospect of abolition. I tried to winkle the tiniest criticism of the leader out of him, but this proved impossible. Yet to my eyes the difference is evident and it's not just that Neil Kinnock now regards himself as too important to spend ten minutes with 'Islander'. For Ken is a 'post-consensus' politician, in the historic sense that I'm using the word. He has shown how new sorts of alliances and support lie on the other, brighter side of the Parliamentary-Monarchical order, while Kinnock seeks to rescue the good old regime that made him what he is.

○

It was interesting listening to Ken summing up his experience to an American. The emphasis on feminism and blacks and gays; his criticism of the unions in County Hall: 'After the government they gave us the most trouble'; his suspicion that Labour's official endorsement of the Greater London Enterprise Board is just for show.

In the November *Chartist* he stressed that workers' participation is 'a key to the success of enterprise boards'. At lunch, the discussion got round to the GLC's Popular Planning Unit, headed by Hilary Wainright — one of the

authors of the Socialist Society's new manifesto *Empowering the Powerless* (available like everything else from 9 Poland Street, London W1). 'Labour', said Ken, 'still favours unpopular planning'.

The traditional Left were not spared either. I suppose what I've always liked about Livingstone is not just his sense of humour, but the way he argues, in a direct fashion which is neither on behalf of the nation (that old Parliamentary plumstone of self-importance), nor at the behest of the even more solemn proletariat. 'Lenin and Trotsky', he insisted, 'would have used advertising jingles'. I always thought they did, following the well known rock song, 'Bread, land and peace!'

○

What would Gerry Healy have said! The public revelation of the way he used young female members of the so-called Workers Revolutionary Party as a harem caused elation amongst many who knew of his ways. A friend of mine who was once a member explained that it was something like being in the Moonies, but I thought of Beria. Healy's obsession with young girls was a kind of narcissism, that sought a semblance of power as the historic project crumbled.

I had a single encounter with Healy. Clive Goodwin took me along to one of those evenings at Tony Garnett's place, brilliantly portrayed in Trevor Griffith's play *The Party.* David Edgar revived it at the Barbican earlier this year, a production that now seems like a remembrance. Healy stabbed his finger in my direction and boomed: 'The trouble with you is, you're weak on theory'. Such were the '60s, that in my arrogance this was the one thing I was confident that I'd 'grasped'. Rebuffed, Healy bellowed: 'The trouble with you is, you're *weak*', the last word rolled out like thunder. It was a memorable lesson in Stalinism.

Nor can it be a coincidence that in the very year the CP splits to become insignificant as an organisation, the WRP goes down the drain. They were born under the same star. Now, just like 'all-party consensus', only their ghosts linger.

Islander

ROGER WODDIS

The Song of the Sunday Trader

God made the Sunday Trader
  For a mystery and a sign
That kneeling may show piety,
  But dealing is divine.
In every holy high street
  It is clearly understood
That running short is evil
  And cashing in is good.

The Butcher and the Baker,
  Whose benison you seek,
Believe the time to worship them
  Is seven days a week.
A crying need for underpants,
  For dental floss and cheese
Must be supplied for love of God,
  And sod the employees.

The Sunday-open Grocer
  Has a temple made of tin,
Where cans of chicken noodle soup
  Should not be classed as sin.
He bows to Queen and Family,
  His peace is in God's will
And, sweeter than the sound of bells,
  The ringing of the till.

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Andrzej Krauze

NATO: THE DAVID LANGE TEACH-IN

On the eve of the CND national conference, E.P. THOMPSON takes by the horns one of the trickiest questions for the peace movement and the Left

A DISCUSSION of a sort is going on now about NATO. The question is of first importance. Yet a lot of the discussion is not much more than the striking of attitudes.

Ardent factionalists pop up at thinning meetings of tired campaigners and demand, in the manner of Shakespeare's Ancient Pistol: 'Under which king, Bezonian? Speak, or die!' The attempt is made to narrow choices to pro-or anti-NATO, to drive out non-believers and unmask heretics. The effect will not weaken NATO but may confuse the peace movement.

So: let us forget about heresies and look at the problem of NATO at the end of 1985. There are strong arguments of several kinds.

First, there is the absolutist or moral argument against British membership of NATO. NATO is a military alliance built around US nuclear weapons and strategies. For Britain to 'renounce' its own nukes but still 'shelter' under American nukes, as part of an alliance which threatens the use of nuclear weapons in all its strategies, would be sheer hypocrisy. Britain would simply be like any other non-nuclear NATO client state.

To this may be added all the political arguments about NATO's function as an instrument of US hegemony; and as an anti-Communist alliance which props up one side of the divided world. If Britain were to free itself and move into the non-aligned space alongside Sweden, Austria and Yugoslavia, this would strengthen the forces making for peace.

These are persuasive arguments. I have supported them in the past and I still do. Like all absolutist arguments they have one weakness. They do not envisage *how* this might happen, or the political realities of the first stages. In 1960 it was possible to argue an absolutist case without filling in any scenario, because this scenario was so remote. But in 1985 there are manifest tensions within NATO and, since the 'reform' or break-up of NATO is becoming a political possibility, we have to offer clearer political answers.

A second set of arguments starts off from these changing realities. For strategic, economic and political reasons, Europe and the United States are drifting apart. Star Wars has introduced extreme strains, which NATO governments are trying to hide from public view.

If we count NATO heads, the US might soon be in a minority. By the end of the decade there could be governments influenced by the peace movement in power, not only in Greece, but in Britain and West Germany — and perhaps in Holland, Norway, Canada, Denmark or Italy. Spain may have decided to withdraw from NATO. A West German SPD government (or SPD/Green alliance) might work together with a British Labour government to resist US domination, to 'de-nuclearise' NATO and to make new initiatives towards the East.

Moreover, majority peace movements in several European nations (Holland, Norway, Italy and the German SPD) do not support withdrawal from NATO but propose a negotiating process with the Warsaw powers to reduce both arms and tensions. At the least (it is argued) peace movements and social-democratic parties should try to get their acts together.

These arguments seek to take into account changing political realities. They are often based upon harder thinking and better information than the absolutist case. Their weakness may be that they deal in indefinite hypotheses, leading to uncertain conclusions, and they seem to remove the issue into areas too complex for the activist to follow. The activist (remembering Harold Wilson and Mitterrand) begins to sniff the air for treason.

I will not bother now to rehearse the case of the true Atlanticist adherents of NATO. But there is a third position, arising from Atlanticist defectors who are alarmed by US ego-tripping and Star Wars, which may have some support among Labour's leadership.

This emphasises the danger of provoking American 'isolationism'. If the US is a danger now, how much more dangerous if it were to retreat into a nationalist Rambo fort of its own, lashing out from time to time at Nicaraguans or Libyans or the PLO? Even if Britain were to leave NATO, this would in no way affect US military domination of 'the West'.

Indeed, it might make the situation worse. America would no longer be 'restrained' by its allies. Indeed (it is argued) a Labour government should soften the blow of nuclear disarmament, strengthen its share of NATO conventional duties, and do all in its power to 'keep' America in Europe.

These arguments deserve a serious reply. I think they are wrong because they are

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unsupported by evidence. Under Reagan the US has followed a go-it-alone policy which has disregarded its allies. West European governments have scarcely been consulted about the Geneva negotiations — and were not even informed in advance about SDI.

If one of the functions of NATO (and the Warsaw Pact) is to hold in place client states, then these states will gain in influence if they renounce their client status. The US State Department pays a little attention to India, China — and even Yugoslavia or Sweden — precisely because they are not captives who can be guaranteed, in the last analysis, to dance to the US tunes.

Another danger of this position is that it could lead on, not to the relaxation of inter-bloc tensions, but to European sub-contracting within the framework of overall US hegemony in NATO. That is, to assuage European sensibilities, European NATO will be permitted to develop its own regional responsibilities (perhaps an 'EDI' or European Defence Initiative), with the beefing up of conventional forces. 'Europe' would pay more, for a spurious 'independent role'. This could screw up everything the peace movement has been working for.

Indeed, this whole line of argument is preparing — perhaps unintentionally — the Wilson or Mitterrand-style sell-out that the activist fears. For we shall be told that everything must be done softly, oh so softly, so as not to offend 'the Americans'.

Of course we don't want ranting anti-American exhibitionism. But there are a great many other Americans who will understand what is going on. A peace government in Britain should confidently explain its actions to that other America.

Finally, there is a fourth set of arguments which emphasises that NATO is only one half of the problem. The British might wish to walk out of NATO, but the Poles (and perhaps the Hungarians and Czechs) would also like to walk out of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation. The objective of the peace movement should be the withdrawal of US forces and bases from West Europe *and* of Soviet forces and bases from the other side — and one is not likely to happen without the other.

The question, then, is not whether we should get out of NATO but how and when? What policies will best advance our stated aims of breaking up both armed alliances?

THESE ARGUMENTS swirl around inside our heads. In my own head they give rise to these thoughts:

- This must not become a heresy-hunt. If the argument is conducted in a manner wich divides and confuses the peace movement, then it will defeat its aims. It is perfectly possible in the peace movement to hold to position One, Two or Four, as outlined above. Position Three is a great deal more worrying.
- An important question is, not only how we get out of NATO, but what we go *into*. The Ancient Pistols should be asked this. British isolationism or Little Englandism should not be part of the 'basic case' which campaigners take around the doorsteps. It will not satisfy the citizens. They know very well that the danger of war comes from the overall bloc confrontation and will ask how a non-nuclear Britain can contribute to remaking a peaceful, non-divided world.

Another thought of mine is that I would very much like to grow bananas in my apple orchard. But the climate of Worcestershire does not (for the time being) allow this.

I am not sure whether the political climate of Britain in this decade will be favourable to our walking out of NATO. But it is, already, favourable to closing down Trident, booting out cruise missiles and American bases, and getting out from under Star Wars. It is even possible that we could elect a government committed to those ends.

And this time around we must not blow it. The survival of this earth and its creatures hangs in such a fragile balance that we cannot allow ourselves to alienate the public opinion flowing with us for the sake of forcing upon it doctrinal purities.

To return to bananas, I don't know whether they grow in New Zealand, but we should think carefully about the lessons given by that country.

Mr Lange's government made a small step of principle, but a firm step, from which it has not retreated. It simply served notice that it would no longer receive nuclear-armed warships in its ports. And the heavens fell — threats, sanctions, arm-twisting.

How much more extraordinary will be the consequences if a British government were to honour, firmly and immediately, its pledges to remove cruise and to serve notice upon US nuclear bases. Have we really thought this through? Do we realise how this firm and simple act would shake the pillars of NATO ideology?

Are we preparing ourselves — the peace movement, the Labour Party, public opinion — for the storms that will follow? The sanctions, the arm-twisting, the media assaults, the cabals of senior military officers, the run on the pound, the economic punishments?

Even the mild-mannered 1945-50 government of Mr Attlee was brought to its knees in the end by US economic blackmail. The response of a Reagan or Bush government to the removal of US bases will surpass our imagination. It is time that we prepared opinion for the event.

MY CONCLUSIONS are these. We should refuse abstract disputes about bananas and should cultivate our apples. We should work in the most united way to bring to power a parliamentary majority committed to these policies. This is Stage One. The first step to independence is the most difficult to take and the most epochal in significance. It will signify a Declaration of Independence without precedent in post-war years.

Not only that. We should develop such a head of pressure in public opinion that a government will not only enter Stage One, but will, like Mr Lange, stick to it in the face of all the unleashed furies. If NATO tries to twist Britain's arm, then let NATO expel us.

The hullabaloo unloosed by this will educate the British people much more effectively than resolution-mongering at conferences. The question of NATO itself should remain *an open option* — and we must first open the door to it.

If a British government were to take this giant step, then it must have a political will and a

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foreign policy to steady itself. This must involve an overall peace politics, towards the non-aligned nations, the Third World, and to peaceful American opinion. It should also involve a British 'Ostpolitik'.

By this I mean that Britain, along with European allies, should attempt to build a second tier of diplomatic and security arrangements with the other half of Europe. This will be supported by the less formal cultural and citizens' initiatives of peace movements. This might open up new options of 'twinning' the phased dissolution of both blocs: for example, the mutual 'Swedenisation' of both Britain and Poland. Or British repudiation of United States bases might be twinned with the withdrawal of Soviet occupation forces, 'temporarily' deployed in Czechoslovakia since 1968. These options should be seen, not as preconditions for British actions, but as the goals of an active peace diplomacy.

In my own political judgement, NATO break-up (or a British break-out from NATO) is not, in the present climate, likely to come about without corresponding concessions or loosenings in the Warsaw Treaty bloc. It would, of course, be more pure-minded if we were to jump tomorrow off the edge, with eyes shut and with no thought of where we might fall.

But . . . yes, we have no bananas today. □

AP

Gee, honey, those Dooks sure knew how to handle the peasants. . .

ART FOR CASH SAKE

COPIES OF THE DOOK'S KNICKERS

Charles and Di's visit on 11 November added the finishing touches to Washington's Sale of the Olde Worlde. CLAUDIA WRIGHT was there

Washington DC

THE EXHIBITION of English country house treasures that has just opened here — to extravagant gasps from socialites from one end of the country to the other — reminds me of nothing so much as the story of Colin Cowdrey and the Duke of Norfolk's underpants.

The great cricketer, you may remember, was a close friend of the old Duke. When the Duke died and had been buried, Cowdrey helped the Duchess sort out his effects — and as souvenirs took home some suits, silk top hats in leather boxes and matching sets of the Duke's sea-island cotton underpants, which Cowdrey used to enjoy putting on and wearing around the house.

For what the organisers of the Washington exhibition have done is to promote the combination of fantasy and envy that Cowdrey enjoyed when wearing Norfolk's drawers — a combination Americans can be induced to pay many Reagan-inflated dollars to experience. Not that the exhibition in the National Gallery of Art charges admission — the viewing is still free. However, the not-so-subliminal purpose of the exhibition is to generate droves of new American tourists to the country seats themselves (the gallery is promising to have all the objects back home and in place by the time the houses re-open to visitors in spring); and even more profitable than that, to promote the sale of everything from replicas of stately home interiors, to raincoats, garden seats, luxury cars, brogues, Britrail passes, gin and tonic, tea, mustard and pickles.

Several years ago, before Nelson Rockefeller died — clothed in underwear a female assistant was helping him put on at the time — he had had the clever idea of reproducing shelves and shelves of his porcelain and art collection and flogging each piece with a signed certificate authenticating it as having been copied from an original possessed by himself. He opened a shop for these copies at a fashionable Manhattan address which was given the name 'The Nelson Rockefeller Collection'. In the present instance, the National Gallery — being a US government financed institution — is only playing the barker, advertising what others, including the present Duke of Norfolk, have for sale. This may sound shallow and sordid, but it is something much deeper. The principle here is that if the social and aesthetic significance of the art object can be divorced from its meaning, isolated from its creator and displaced to become the property of the person who has paid money, acquired, or as the National Gallery prefers to say, collected it, then you will have struck a limitless money gusher out of catering to the sort of people who envy sitting in Norfolk's underpants ... or authenticated copies thereof.

Don't misunderstand me — I enjoy seeing Mary Queen of Scots's rosary — but rather more for its significance in what befell her and why than because it is owned at the moment by the Duke of Norfolk. I'm also glad to have seen Praxiteles's bust of Aphrodite, but not because it had been spirited away from Greece and given the dubious cachet of belonging to Petworth House in Sussex. I'm even modestly thrilled that the two large terracotta eagles that guard my own front door may have been inspired by a first century Roman marble — but the fact that the Earl of Wemyss and March also got his hands on it strikes me as hugely irrelevant.

Since the spotlight is so obviously on the owner, rather than the object, it's appropriate that the exhibition has been sub-titled 'Five Hundred Years of Private Patronage and Art Collecting.' Still, it is very odd that this particular crowd of stately home owners and their American friends should make such a display of acquisitiveness of such *non-English* artifacts as Delft, Italian silver, Russian jewellery, Dutch masters and Chinese porcelain and silk.

When the French put on their grand show of the Sun King, Louis XIV, they didn't exhibit anything but French-made works. Have we no national pride, or have we decided to give the Americans what we think they like — fantasies of Empire in which the rulers collect tribute wherever something catches their fancy? Or was this show somebody's idea of persuading the Reagan Administration to award Britain the multi-billion-dollar battlefield communications contract, not because our handiwork was any better than the French stuff, but because we, or at least our Lords and Ladies, are inherently superior people? What then to make of the fact that on 6 November we lost the contract to the French?

It is no accident this exhibition appeals to the Reagan Administration in a way no other has done. Mr and Mrs Reagan's friends have raised art collecting as a tax dodge to an art form of its own. But there's more to this. The director of the National Gallery, J. Carter Brown, tells visitors in his 'acoustiguide' tour of the exhibits that Queen Elizabeth I had 'a belief in strong rule coupled with appeals to public support (maintained) partly through a vast network of

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informants' — does that sound familiar as Elizabethan history or modern American? Van Dyck is credited with 'inventing the idea of making people look really grand' — that almost elevates the White House staff to Old Master status. And how about this to explain what happened to the opulent Jacobeans in 1640 — they got 'out of touch with what was happening in the countryside where the small squires were being taxed beyond endurance'. If you believe that, you are ready to celebrate Ronald and Nancy Reagan as William and Mary.

This isn't a fanciful idea to the Reagans or their supporters. But you can't expect those who are presently re-making history to be articulate in re-telling it. That is why the President's wife, speaking after her private tour of the exhibition, commented in one of her delphic, two-word paragraphs: 'It's beautiful'.

And the President, not to appear to have needed prompting, said: 'Yes'. □

USSR

THE MALCHIK MEETS THE LONE RANGER

The Americans are wilfully drawing a neo-Stalinist portrait of Mikhail Gorbachev, whom everything indicates to be a reformist, assesses STEPHEN COHEN

IF THE UNITED States really wanted to improve political relations with the Soviet Union and end the nuclear arms race, the Geneva summit meeting between Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev would be a historic opportunity. It is not that the Soviet Union has suddenly become a benign or likeminded superpower but that, as Gorbachev has made clear repeatedly, his own 'foreign policy is an extension of domestic policy'. Simply put, in order to carry out his programme of reform at home, Gorbachev needs détente and arms control.

None of this is achnowledged by the Reagan Administration, which has an acute case of Cold War myopia about developments inside the Soviet Union. Ever since Gorbachev became General Secretary in March, it has portrayed him as a slicker but traditional Soviet apparatchik, even a 'neo-Stalinist', and his policy statements as nothing but 'public relations'.

According to General Edward L. Rowny, special adviser to the President and secretary of state for arms control matters, 'Gorbachev is likely to emulate most of his predecessors and merely ensure continuity'. And the President said, on 22 October: 'We have yet to see a change in fundamental Soviet positions'.

In reality, everything indicates that Gorbachev is the first reform-minded Soviet leader since Nikita Khrushchev consolidated his power in the 1950s. Even before taking office, he pointedly identified himself with the reformist wing of the Communist Party, calling for 'deep transformations' and 'profound changes' in the state economic system.

Since March, he has outlined a far-reaching decentralisation of industrial management and curtailment of ministerial control, while declaring that 'more major, important decisions' are still to come. If recent proposals in *Pravda* and *Izvestia* are an indication, those decisions may introduce among other things, a considerably larger role for private enterprise and market relations.

Such reforms will not bring capitalism or democracy to the Soviet Union, but they will, inescapably, entail liberalising changes in various areas. They may not alter the situation of active dissidents, but they will improve the everyday life of millions of ordinary citizens and, by easing the political atmosphere and specifically censorship, respond to the aspirations of thousands of intellectuals and artists. Gorbachev may even be preparing to pick up Khrushchev's fallen banner of official de-Stalinisation, as suggested in September by two prominent anti-Stalinist publications by Evgeny Evtushenko, a bellwether of that long suppressed cause.

But these internal possibilities stand no chance without a significant improvement in Soviet-American relations — for two fundamental reasons. First, the economic reforms envisaged by Gorbachev will require major new investments in non-defence sectors, especially consumer-related industries. Given the laggardly rate of Soviet economic growth, such expenditures will be impossible unless military spending can be reduced or at least frozen. And that will require an end to the strategic weapons race, certainly one as costly as President Reagan's Star Wars programme.

Second, Gorbachev needs détente with the United States if he is to become any kind of strong reform leader in the deeply conservative Soviet system. He has brought other reform-minded officials into the top leadership, and recently he ousted two important opponents of economic change, former Prime Minister Nikolai Tikhonov and the longtime Gosplan chief Nikolai Baibakov.

But he still must overcome widespread protests, in the party elite and the state bureaucracy, that even modest forms of decentralisation and liberalisation are too dangerous because of 'the growing American threat'. Better relations with Western Europe, Japan and China, which the Gorbachev leadership is also promising, cannot solve this central problem. In official Soviet eyes, the United States is the source of the political anxiety and the arms race.

DESPITE THESE compelling domestic factors behind Gorbachev's appeals for a 'revival of détente', he is clearly not going to come to the Geneva summit as a 'supplicant', as the Soviet press has been warning in recent weeks. Though eager to negotiate political and military agreements, Gorbachev will be 'tough', as the American cliché goes, partly because all leaders of great powers must be so, but also because of his special position as the Soviet Union's youngest and most Westernised leader in sixty years.

Those personal traits, along with Gorbachev's reform programme, have aroused resentment among old-line, iron-curtain Soviet conservatives, who have been heard to refer to him derisively as *malchik*, or 'the kid', and as 'not one of us'.

Such attitudes no doubt motivated Andrei Gromyko's unusual assurance to the Central Committee gathering that elected Gorbachev: 'Comrades, this man has a nice smile, but he's got iron teeth'. Nonetheless, if met by a

Camera Press

A bear with iron teeth — but Gorbachev the reformist could do with external peace and quiet

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conciliatory rather than a confrontational President Reagan, Gorbachev could *show* that he has teeth simply by insisting on US recognition of the Soviet Union's right to equal political status in world affairs. Indeed, for Soviet leaders, that has been the real symbolic importance of summits ever since they began during World War II.

At stake for Gorbachev is not only his personal fate as a reform leader but the political agenda of a new generation of Soviet officials who will be in charge into the next century. Unable to claim credit for any of the great achievements of the Soviet past — from industrialisation and the defeat of Nazi Germany to the nation's rise to superpower status — they may well seek their generational destiny in reform at home rather than in more power abroad.

But will the Reagan Administration seize this historic opportunity for a new and possibly lasting détente? If it fails to do so, as now seems likely, it will be saying that the United States actually prefers cold war and a nuclear arms race, or something worse, forever. □

Stephen Cohen is professor of politics at Princeton University.

NIGERIA

BRITS FLY ROUGHSHOD THROUGH AFRICAN LAW

The British are up in arms about the 14-year sentences on their engineers — but what about the outrage to the Nigerians' own sovereignty? SUZANNE CRONJE reports

THERE WAS a huge outcry last month when two British aircraft engineers, Kenneth Clark and Angus Patterson, were sentenced in Nigeria to 14 years imprisonment each for conspiracy and theft of an executive jet from the international airport in Lagos. The sentences were indeed the maximum which could be given and were intended to be exemplary, because of the circumstances surrounding the incident.

Sir Geoffrey Howe summoned Nigeria's Acting High Commissioner in London to protest at the punishment as 'shockingly severe'. Their Liberal MP, Malcolm Bruce, has already demanded that continued diplomatic relations between Britain and Nigeria should be made conditional on the release of the men. The agitation is unlikely to die down, particularly if the two men's appeal fails.

Clark and Patterson were in the unfortunate position of having to carry the can for the main actors in the drama: the pilot, Mike Howard, who flew out the Hawker Siddeley 125, and his first officer, Beatrice Spalding. Behind these two pilots was the British company, Shirlstar Container Transport, which originally sold the plane to a Nigerian businessman, who then fell behind in his payments on it.

Howard and Spalding were paid £25,000 by Shirlstar to get the aircraft back by flying it out of Nigeria. They hired Clark and Patterson to make the plane airworthy, which they did — against the advice of their employer in Lagos, Bristow Helicopters (Nigeria) Ltd.

In his evidence during the trial of the two engineers, the general manager of Bristow in Lagos, Hamilton Richard Carton-Parry, said he had met Howard and Spalding and had been opposed to their undertaking the work. This was at a time when the Nigerian government had grounded private aircraft, because the authorities were in the middle of a complete Nigerian currency changeover, and the authorities wanted to prevent bank notes being brought into the country. Security was extremely tight and it is inconceivable that Clark and Patterson did not know that there was a total ban on flights. Carton-Parry said he had been 'extremely unhappy' when he heard that his advice had been disregarded.

Howard had already been in touch with the Nigerian aviation authorities through the British High Commission in Lagos to recover the debt, but in vain. The British-based company explained that it had attempted to repossess the plane directly, because it regarded court action as 'a last resort'.

Howard took off on 19 May 1984 without informing the authorities, without filing a flight plan and without lights. When Lagos raised the alarm, neighbouring countries were put on the alert and Howard and Spalding were challenged by Ghanaian air traffic control. They replied that they were flying from Gabon and en route to Abidjan in the Ivory Coast. When they landed, they were arrested and the plane impounded.

NIGERIA immediately asked for the return of the aircraft and its crew. Flight-Lieutenant Akin Andre of the Nigerian Air Force was sent to Abidjan to recover the jet and to take charge of the crew. When he arrived he was met not only by the Ivorian authorities but by the British chargé d'affaires, J. A. Jamieson, and informed that Howard and Spalding would not be released to him. He subsequently watched them leave Abidjan on an international flight for London.

So far as Nigeria is concerned, the British government actively intervened against its interests in the case. Patterson and Clark were then arrested in Nigeria and charged. A third man, Barry Glover, chief engineer with Britstow (Nigeria), was detained with them but later released. He left Nigeria soon afterwards, leaving no forwarding address, the court was told.

The outrage in Nigeria over the arrogant disregard with which its security and safety regulations had been flouted mirrored the feelings in Britain when an attempt to kidnap a former Nigerian transport minister, Umaru Dikko, was foiled at Stanstead Airport. But the glib assumption that Clark and Patterson were held as hostages for Dikko was quite untrue, because the Dikko affair happened several weeks *after* Clark and Patterson were arrested. Anti-British feelings over the Dikko affair may have added to the severity of the sentence which Clark and Patterson eventually received, but the cases were quite unrelated.

After sentence was announced, the chairman of Shirlstar, Sir Benjamin Slade, said the Foreign Office was directly responsible for 'this wretched affair' by refusing to repatriate Dikko, who is wanted in Nigeria on charges of massive embezzlement. Nigeria's foreign minister, Professor Bola Akinyemi, expressed considerable annoyance during the recent Commonwealth conference over press reports that an exchange of the two Britons for Dikko had been discussed by Sir Geoffrey Howe and the leader of the Nigerian delegation, Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe. Ukiwe has since stressed that no formal offer by Britain was made, though he did say in an interview 'We don't want Britons in Nigerian jails, and you don't want Nigerians in British jails' — a possible reference to the Nigerian officer, Major Yusuf, who is serving a 12-year sentence in the UK for his part in the Dikko kidnapping affair. □

This England

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□On police insistence, Blackpool borough council has spent £56,000 on measures to protect Tory delegates. In return the Government will lop another £100,000 off their rate support grant for overspending. — *The Times* (J. C. Latham)

□A man with moles ruining his lawn buried a radio, complete with extension aerial, in his back garden and turned it to Radio One. The moles instantly disappeared. 'It's a highly effective form of attack. They seem immune to all known forms of deterrent.' Obviously moles don't dig Radio One. — *Daily Mirror* (Craig Voller)

□The Metropolitan Police have devised a sophisticated early-warning system for riots — asking the dairies to let them know when there's a surge in milk bottle disappearance. 'They've made a standing request on this,' said Mike Hodges, sales director for Express Dairies, yesterday. 'But we haven't been able to report anything yet.' — the *Guardian* (Mr J. Habberjam)

□A prescription which Mr Hyman Saiewitz, a pharmacist at Boots chemist, Finchley Road, found suspiciously easy to read, turned out to be a forgery, prosecuting counsel told Wood Green Crown Court yesterday. — *Daily Telegraph* (G. M. Moger)

□Despairing townsfolk have commemorated a gas board's gaping hole in the road by treating it to a mock birthday party. The hole was created over a year ago at a busy road junction in Chepstow, Gwent. — *The Weekly News* (George Moor)

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LETTERS

Free on Sundays

John Hartman, London SE23

Since I am neither unemployed nor any longer a penniless student, I fail to see why I shouldn't pay £2 to enter the V&A museum (*NS* 25 October). I pay a lot more to get into cinemas, theatres, concert halls and special exhibitions at the Hayward and Tate galleries, not to mention Lords, Wimbledon and Stamford Bridge. (I decline to make a hard and fast distinction between 'art' and 'entertainment'.) I also paid to get into the major art galleries in New York, Boston, Washington, Paris, Florence, Madrid, etc. Since I could afford the air-fare I could hardly complain about museum entrance fees, and I imagine that the vast majority of foreign tourists here feel the same.

Free museums are a shibboleth of the Left. If entry were free to the unemployed, and one day a week (Sunday?) remained free for everybody, as in Paris, the money provided by other visitors would greatly benefit museums, and free government funds for other purposes. Why should the *government* spend millions on, for example, old master paintings, when millions of spectators would willingly pay to see them, when schools can no longer afford to buy books, hospitals to employ cleaners, etc?

No, Lambeth won't go Liberal

Matthew Warburton, Lambeth Labour Councillor

On 31 October there was a council by-election in Tulse Hill Ward in Lambeth. The Labour candidate increased our share of the vote from 50 per cent to 59 per cent. The Alliance came a poor third. I went to bed happy.

So it was an unpleasant shock to read John Rentoul's article, 'Shake up for the Left kaleidoscope' (*NS* 1 November), claiming that Lambeth is likely to fall to the Liberals next May, if not before. As if in explanation he added in parenthesis that Labour has a majority of one and has lost several recent by-elections. Wrong.

Labour has a majority of four — four more than at the 1982 local elections and has won seven by-elections in the last 18 months, all with substantial swings to Labour. The first of them was a gain from the Liberals. Neither party of the Alliance has won a seat from Labour since 1982.

Without claiming to be an expert on Peter Kellner's slide-ometer I would guess that only an utter collapse of the Tory vote would let the Alliance anywhere near a majority next May in Lambeth.

It may be inconvenient for the adherents of the Neil Kinnock school of political strategy but in Lambeth we can fight and win elections despite making no bones about our socialist politics. I know this doesn't fit neatly into John Rentoul's scheme of things, but he has no right to misrepresent the facts just because they do not suit him.

Australian bomb tests

Margaret Gowing, Oxford

Your extract (*NS* 8 November) from Joan Smith's *Clouds of Deceit* quotes my words 'the inherent stupidity' in relation to testing the first British atom bomb in Australia. Being incomplete, the quotation is misleading. I wrote (*Independence and Deterrence*, Vol. 1) of 'the inherent stupidity of an independent test in Australia when the Americans had such well-developed test sites'. That is, the British wanted to use the US testing site and facilities but the United States reply to their request was long delayed, then hedged about with unacceptable conditions. Even when these were modified, it was feared in the light of previous traumatic experience in Anglo-American atomic negotiations that the offer might later be withdrawn. Hence the initial request, and final decision, to hold the test in Australia.

Still speaking

Frances Morrell, Leader of ILEA, County Hall, London SE1

When people in the Labour Party disagree they do not cease to speak to one another, as Peter Kellner's reference to Tony Benn seems to suggest (*NS* 1 November). On the contrary, they argue. An important debate about the objectives of democratic socialism is taking place in the columns of *Tribune* as well as *New Socialist* and *New Statesman*, which have printed important theoretical contributions.

I think it fair to say that there is a refreshing absence of pejorative personal comment in most of the published contributions to the debate. This is part of the reason why many party members feel more optimistic about the Labour Party than they did this time last year.

Left vs Gillick

Andrew Cotton, SW12

It is curious indeed to see how unequivocal has been the support of the 'Left' for the Lords *vs* Gillick judgment. At the undoubted risk of a torrent of abuse from the 'women's right to choose' campaign, may I proffer the reasons for my own particular belief that this victory may have been won at the expense of some of our most important socialist values?

First, the ruling represents not a question of freedom for women but more an issue of who is to enforce a constraint. This is not the place to debate the gynaecological implications of under-age sex, nor the common law offences committed by assisting in the act; it is my opinion, however, that the ruling represents a victory for the professional and 'soi disant' responsible class of GPs who rest happy in the belief that none of their children are likely to commit the ultimate breach of filial trust. This belief is the more soundly based when one considers how many daughters of GPs are also patients on their fathers' lists.

The medical profession now has the unfettered freedom to interfere in the running of the working-class family structure. It is the power to classify parents into 'responsible' and 'otherwise' which makes the Lords' judgment so very pernicious and so thoroughly classist.

The voices of the Left would do well to consider why Tory/church support for Gillick was so very unforthcoming. Perhaps the decision crosses political boundaries too absolutely to talk of victory or defeat on either side; if this is the case, the vilification of Victoria Gillick might prove to be one of the more intemperate campaigns of recent years.

In defence of planning

Francis Oeser, London NW5

Peter Kellner saying (*NS* 8 November) that 'real life' problems must be solved in more than manifesto and commitment, suggests an essential attitude to change. Increasingly I feel (given socialist aims) it is *how* we move towards them which is the real dynamic of making a better world.

Planning legislation of 1944 is a case in point: nationalising land certainly underlies the machinery for reviewing land use; but the

Take me to your Leader
by Moanin' Minnie
HERE I AM IN THE GUTTER, JOBLESS, HOMELESS AND HUNGRY··· BUT AT LEAST I'VE STILL GOT THE FAMILY SILVER
J.S.Blunk
I'LL TAKE THAT!
SNATCH!
J.S.B
IT'S MINE! GIVE IT BACK!
I'D LIKE TO SAY YES··· WHY DON'T YOU BUY A SHARE AND OWN AN EGGSPOON?
JOHN MINNION

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machinery itself (the ends, by which the means are achieved) has influenced and benefitted the UK. Many citizens, councillors, professionals, as well as speculators have been involved in committees, enquiries etc, until now, questions of land use are more public; and with public involvement, questions of 'public good' must be reviewed as part of the process. Also, the environment professions (architects, engineers) were pushed into partnership with the new profession of planners — the complex interconnection is still evolving, sadly, more slowly in education than in offices.

The planning process may seem lengthy, verbose and expensive, but participation is more essential than time, money or frustration, the long-term result of our feeling we are, and are enabled, to be responsible for our environment, is a time-honoured socialist principle.

To an admirable extent this has been achieved in London. The GLC and its Boroughs operate in ways which allow both strategy and local detail to influence planning decisions, whereas the government has been unable to make its policies of employment and well-being a reality. The lesson is being learnt and applied in London, so it is a double destruction to demolish the administration of our cities.

Sisters all

Ann Lalic, Documentary Department, BBC, Kensington House, Richmond Way, London W14 0AX.

I am researching a film that will attempt to describe and explain the bond between sisters. I would be interested in hearing from anyone who feels that their relationship with their sister has been a particularly formative or unusual one, either for good or ill.

Consensus support for FREEZE

Dr Morris Bradley, Nuclear Weapons FREEZE, Bristol

Jamie Dettmer's suggestion (*NS* 1 November) that FREEZE support comes mainly from the Alliance is directly contradicted by hard evidence. The most crucial point about the FREEZE initiative is that it can repeatedly demonstrate widespread support from all political parties and indeed from non-political members of the public. Exceptionally thorough ballots have been carried out in different parts of Britain and have consistently shown overwhelming majority support.

Last month an impressive 85 per cent support for the FREEZE was demonstrated by balloting an entire Edinburgh District Council ward, which was chosen because its voting pattern in the 1984 election reflected that of Britain as a whole in the percentages of the Conservative majority, the Labour second place, and the Alliance third.

The latest MORI poll of FREEZE found support from Conservative voters at 83 per cent, Alliance voters at 82 per cent, and Labour voters at 84 per cent, across both sexes and from 15 to over 55 years of age.

Jamie Dettmer's article is also mistaken in saying that FREEZE could divide the peace movement: all peace groups, including CND, are united in seeking to free us from the nuclear nightmare. CND has a different emphasis from FREEZE because it tackles the problems of advocating a detailed nuclear policy for Britain. The FREEZE emphasises a call for all nations to halt the testing, production and deployment of all nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. The Freeze exposes the sham of the proposals and counter proposals we have had from governments over decades of negotiation, even when these are for very large cuts in obsolete weapons, because such proposals always allow new, more dangerous weapons to be developed and deployed.

FREEZE is decisive in its emphasis that nothing less than a complete halt to the arms race is tolerable, and that once this can be totally secured, reduction in the present unacceptable numbers of weapons would follow rapidly. It seems from the support that FREEZE receives throughout the world that humanity understand this need to stop the arms race. At the United Nations no less than 127 nations have agreed to FREEZE and if Britain and the United States would also agree, would it still be possible for the negotiations to go on failing indefinitely?

FEEDBACK

Politics in this year's colours

WHO DOUBTS that the *Sun* is a greater menace than *Cosmopolitan (NS* 1 November)? Not me. But I don't read either of them. As a radical feminist who believes that politics (some of it) takes place in the bedroom, I'd still rather buy *Practical Computing*. What's more, it doesn't comfort me at all to see *Spare Rib* redesigned by someone from the *Face*. I don't blame *SR*, for they are only doing what everyone on the Left is doing: rediscovering 'style'.

In the '60s, radicals — though not Left parties — definitely had it. In the '70s we lost it, and (we thought) simultaneously lost ground. In these terrible grey '80s we have decided that we need to hire an ad agency for the Revolution. No more red, white and black, please! If you are a feminist, no more dungarees; if you are a peace campaigner, throw away those sandals. *Marxism Today* had a special supplement on communications last month that even appeared to be called 'Style' — full of ads for media consultants (all co-operatives, naturally).

Can I complain? I wrote an article for that same supplement. I've long rejected photos of fists (and the word 'struggle'). Like everyone on the Left, surely, I felt ashamed at the scruffiness of the Labour Party's last election campaign, and I cheer to see Kinnock come across well on TV. I've secretly strived to be 'the acceptable face of lesbianism', hooked, totally hooked, on following fashion.

I do still believe that, if you can get to talk to enough people, radical politics will convince them. In the case of women's liberation, it's not so much old hat as next century's headgear — who in this country knows enough about it to have rejected it, whatever the talk in fashionable circles about 'post-feminism'? Feminism is still growing exponentially, if we're counting heads. We have a dynamite product.

And yes, we do have to sell it. It was always sheer stupidity for anyone on the Left to think that people would come to it because they 'ought' to. The approach for too long has been to lecture, or (worse) even suggest that they must be thick or evil not just to intuit we're right.

But what are we actually trying to do? Are we working on putting our ideas across clearly? Or are we trying to package a product we suspect isn't very attractive — by lying, or even removing altogether the nasty bits? I'm not trying to be more moralistic than I already (as a radical) feel I am. I just think, in some old-fashioned way, that I want people to be persuaded because we're right. The Labour Party may have legitimate reasons for thinking about the package first — get the votes, and then we can act — though I'm not entirely convinced. For anyone else on the Left, what could we possibly gain by seeming to be something we're not, or actually watering ourselves down? So people might buy our magazines— but then what?

Now I can see what *Face*-types make of *Spare Rib*, I realise that I'm just not that interested in style myself. What I want is what I always wanted: to present radical feminism, with all its anger and rough spots. I don't want to make it look light or easy, because it isn't. Nor is socialist change; nor is developing a non-Western-centric, non-xenophobic culture. I want to be made to question everything, and I want the space in turn to make others question.

I cling to some vision, not yet realised, of *Spare Rib*. Of hard news, wide comment, debate, new issues, old issues revisited. A publication that is accessible, but not comfortable (access and comfort are not synonymous); that is obviously produced by human beings — not creatures from another social world, more perfect than our own. My own partial solution is to work on a magazine that has a commitment to pursuing a particular political theory, regardless of how popular or not that is: so that when you want uncompromising radical feminism, critical of men but entirely opposed to a belief that biology's to blame, you'll find *Trouble and Strife*. (It is also calmly pleasant to look at. But it'll never sell a million.)

In all this flurry of style, I notice one interesting counter-trend. Among women actively involved in women's liberation, one paper — probably the scruffiest around — is steadily gaining ground. The news is stuffed on the page, the letters pages thunder, details of women's lives around the world are printed in smudged type. It's been accused of being old-fashioned in its pre-occupation with news and issues — and the collective, not just the paper itself, lambasted as 'poorly groomed'. Its very ('60s) title rejects the idea of politics as sexy. But I love it — *off our backs*. The bad news is, of course, it isn't British.

The nearest British equivalent to *oob* may be the *New Statesman* itself — and no, it's not that near. The *NS* does at least provide new news, even if the quality of debate is strangely poor. (In despair, I suspect that the *Guardian* letters page is the liveliest forum around.) What I require, I think, is that we turn our attention not to appearance, but dig deeper in our content. Make it look lively because it is lively, in fact. Make it the place to be because otherwise you'll miss out on genuinely new information and ideas.

'Style...hardly the stuff to wobble patriarchy or topple capitalism', as Anne Karpf almost put it. Style may be enough for the SDP — what else do they have, after all? But it's a shallow, fickle thing, no substitute for — well, you know, passion, commitment, and vision. Glossy magazines are made to be thrown away.

Ruth Wallsgrove

Ruth Wallsgrove worked on Spare Rib *and now is a member of the* Trouble and Strife *collective.*

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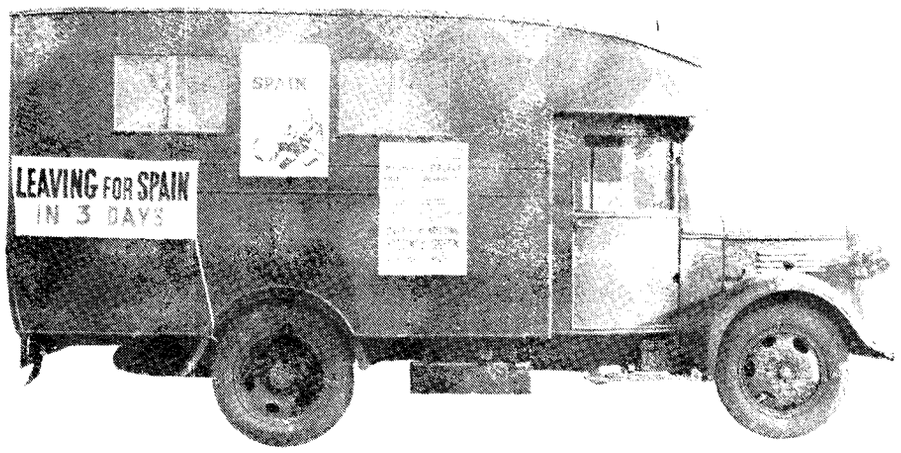

In remembrance of Spain past

And do we remember them? We've heard of the famous who went to Spain 50 years ago next summer — but what, asks JUDITH COOK, of the 'unknowns', who have their tales too?

THEY WERE A MOTLEY crew. Few of them had ever been out of the country before, the majority had no passports and no experience of getting one or of how to set about foreign travel.

Those who went early bought special weekend excursion tickets to the Great Exhibition in Paris, registered with the Communist Party and were despatched to Spain by train or bus. Later, when it became quite illegal, they got to Paris as best they could, were taken down to the Spanish border and then climbed the Pyrenees using the smugglers' paths into Spain, often unsuitably dressed in thin jackets and plimsolls. Few had previous military experience.

They were the British working-class volunteers for the Republic in the Spanish Civil War who were eventually to form the British Battalion of the Fifteenth International Brigade.

Since the end of 'The Spanish War', as the veterans call it, it is the famous names which have been associated with it: the Romilleys; Laurie Lee; George Orwell; Hemingway; and the romantic figure of the poet John Cornford, a white bandage around his head, dying the day after his 21st birthday having written of that 'quiet section of a quiet front.' Those who survived the war and returned to their working lives did not write books. Nobody is sure exactly how many of them there were, but probably about 2,500, a number which included a handful of women.

When I began tracing them to record their experiences in the late 1970s there were still a fair number of lively and articulate survivors left to tell the tale, but their number is now sadly depleted. It has taken 50 years for England to remember those who fought — Scotland and Wales have had memorials to their Spanish volunteers for several years. It was left to the survivors to organise their own memorial and to the GLC to donate a site.

All photos: Marx Memorial Library

The beginning . . . two Britons, a woman and a man, start the long haul over the Pyrenees to Spain

It is a war which stll haunts us, a deeply shaming experience for those who remember its circumstances and Britain's policy of non-alignment (history now repeating itself with South Africa). It was a time when the principles involved were seen in stark black and white terms by those who fought and those who supported them. It was also just about the last time, at least in Europe, that men thought they could take to the streets and fight tanks with their bare hands and win.

The volunteers came from all over Britain but predominantly from four areas, South Wales, Clydeside, Manchester and London, and it was easy to see why. They were the victims of the depression and most of them had been involved in anti-fascist activites during the preceding years. Hugh Thomas in his revised edition of his *Spanish Civil War* (in which he also revised some of his opinions) says 'many of the British volunteers desired some outlet through which to purge some private grief or maladjustment.'

There is no basis for this at all and he can have spoken to very few of them. Bill Alexander, one of the commanders of the British Battalion, says recruitment was mainly in the age group 25 — 35 'because it was found that men below 18 years, usually brought up in the harshness of mass unemployment in Britain, lacked the physical reserves to stand up to the strain and inadequate diet'. Some were considerably older. Tom Picton, a miner from Treherbert, was 52 when he was shot dead as a prisoner in 1938; and George Aitken (the father of the journalist, Ian Aitken) was 42 when he arrived in Spain, and was a veteran of the 1914-1918 war.

Garry McCartney, Scottish secretary of the International Brigade Association, found 467 Scots who went to Spain. 134 were killed, 30 taken prisoner and 342 returned. Most came from either Clydeside or Aberdeen. Typical of these was Syd Quinn, 13th child out of 14, born to Catholic parents. The mother died leaving 10 orphans; half the family were eventually wiped out by TB. He gravitated to the CP: 'If you had a modicum of intelligence you knew you were being conned — the working class had been conned for years.' After years of unemployment he joined the army: 'I was young, I had no prospects, it was as simple as that.'

Bob Cooney from Aberdeen spoke of the

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All Photos: Mark Memorial Library

British ambulancemen in Barcelona in 1937

'open university' of the soapbox orators. He marched, demonstrated and fought the fascists: 'I felt we had to smash them off the streets. When the BUF [*'British Union of Fascists*] 'arrived we'd shout "These are the black-shirted bastards who are murdering kiddies in Spain — the war had just begun — spit on them, kids."' In an interesting sidelight he explained how the BUF would make for the working-class streets 'and sometimes we'd be too late because the women had already dealt with them...'

HYWEL FRANCIS of the South Wales Miners' Library puts the number of those who went from Wales at about 170. The largest single area from which they came was the mining valleys of South Wales. 104 were Communists, the rest Labour or ILP except for one Liberal. On the whole they were older than the average volunteers, most were married with families and had been unemployed for long periods.

Typical of these was the late Will Paynter, later to become president of the National Union of Mineworkers. He had worked at the Cymmer Colliery in the Rhondda since 1918, on the coal face, and had cut his political teeth on the General Strike. Paynter went to Spain as a political commissar but was sent home fairly early on. He had married not long before leaving and his wife was pregnant. He felt concern about her, which was justified, as she died from complications in childbirth after leaving him twins.

One of my own favourites was Charles Morgan: 'I wasn't involved in the class struggle before Spain.' He was sick of poverty, living on 15s 3d a week. He got so fed up he went off and joined the Foreign Legion for three years 'but they didn't encourage either individualism or socialism. I was politically dumb. I was a nitwit. I don't make any claims that I went out as a crusader, it would be hypocrisy.' He arrived in Spain in the same batch as Errol Flynn 'nice enough chap, can't think why they made all that fuss about the bugger's sex life.' Among the Londoners was Fred Copeman who became one of the heroes of the battle of Jarama. 'I was sacked from many jobs. "Get that bloody Red out", they'd say and I went to prison five times for the National Union of Unemployed Working Men... I fought the fascists before I knew much about politics at all because they were just arrogant, bloody bastards looking for a fight.'

Among the earliest arrivals in Spain were Syd Quinn and Maurice Levine (a political activist from Manchester). They were processed in Paris and went to Spain the normal way. George Aitken too says he got through without any trouble at all. Fred Copeman and Joe Norman climbed the Pyrenees. Copeman told me 'God, when we arrived at the Pyrenees... I'd never climbed before in my bloody life. Every mountain you climbed there was another bugger. You wondered when the hell you were going to get there.' Joe Norman says he climbed in what he stood up in: 'I wore an old pair of flannels, a khaki shirt, a button top sweater and plimsolls.' By the time Charles Morgan set off in 1937 'Victoria Station was thick like flies with detective men looking for people like us. You could tell which they were by their huge feet.'

THE FIRST CONFRONTATIONS of the war took place in and around Madrid in the summer and autumn of 1936. The first actual British casualty was a woman, the artist Felicia Browne who had been working in Spain. She joined the militia in Barcelona on 2 August 1936 and was sent south. On 25 August she was shot dead while trying to rescue a wounded comrade who had been out on patrol.

Walter Greenhalgh from London, one of the early volunteers, was with John Cornford when he was killed near Lopera: 'We were told to advance under cover of darkness before dawn to within sight of the village of Lopera. We did this... we were all lying in a long straight line on the brow of the hill and there were three veterans who had fought in Madrid. John Cornford was one. John had a bandage round his head — he looked like Lord Byron. The bandage was very white and he wouldn't wear a hat and he's up there and I'm on the other side as I was acting as Nathan's runner.' The men were waiting for an artillery barrage to open up and they could see the Fascists coming out of the village with machine guns. 'We wait and wait and finally John climbs up to the brow of the hill to look over and the early sun just catches his white bandage and that was it. He got one straight through the head.'

Most of the men who arrived in Spain got some kind of basic training at Albacete between Madrid and Valencia, but in the early days it was very minimal. The guns they were given dated back to 1878, single-loader rifles for which they grabbed handfulls of cartridges and hoped they would fit.

The British Battalion was formed in the early February of 1937 and the history of the war shows that again and again it was thrown into the very worst of the fighting. Also by that time women were coming to Spain, mostly middle class and mostly nurses. Nan Green, who was secretary of the International Brigade Association until she died in 1984, battled with her conscience as her husband, George, was one of the first to go and she had two young children. He was a fine cellist, a member of the Musicians Union and worked in a hospital in Spain as well as driving ambulances. Although she was officially an administrator she found herself working right on the battlefield. She gave a good deal of blood in the pioneering use of blood transfusions: 'On one occasion, I think it was the second in a fortnight I'd been sent for, I gave a direct transfusion. Those who only give blood in hospitals don't see where it goes and don't know how lovely it is to lie down beside the man who needs it, whose face has gone ghastly white and there's no colour to his lips and you lie there and your blood goes into him and you see the colour go back into his face.'

George wrote to her of his experiences throughout the war but she saw him only a few times while both were in Spain. They met for the last time just after they had crossed the Ebro right at the end of the war, Nan being the first woman across. 'He'd been wounded in the head... When he

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heard the brigades were going to be sent home he demanded to be released from hospital.' He was one of the longest serving volunteers of the whole war and he was killed 'the very last hour of the last day.'

The battle names of the Spanish War are well known — Jarama, Brunete, Teruel, Gandesa, the Ebro. But it was more like the war in Vietnam than either the First or Second world wars. It was messy and it was fought, like many guerrilla actions, in wild terrain.

When they managed leave from the front the men made for Madrid. The diet was both sparse and, in British terms, 'diabolical'. Madrid offered food, warmth, drink and girls. Men who tried to date conventional Spanish girls would find half a dozen brothers turning up on the date as well. On one of Charlie Morgan's leave trips he wrote to *Reynolds News* asking readers to send out their copies of old magazines and papers. 'About two months later a Hungarian captain arrived and shouted "Carole, Carole!': He was jumping in the air and pointing. Coming down the road was a Russian camion. "For you!" he beamed. I said he was loco. "No, for you, all the mail!" No exaggeration — there were over 29,000 letters from all over the world. There were some from young ladies who imagined us as kind of Beau Gestes, lean-faced men with guns, and they proposed marriage..."'

THE INDIVIDUAL STORIES of courage of the survivors are most moving, for like some terrible Greek tragedy you know with hindsight that the odds were always stacked against them. The non-intervention policy meant that they were never properly equipped against an army backed up by both Italian and German professional soldiers, who were seeing it as a rehearsal for what was to come. Almost worse than that was the fact that the war was a tragedy of the fragmented Left. Time after time the men were left bloody and exhausted on the battlefield totally unable to comprehend the bitter political feuding between different political groupings on the Republican side and even among those commanding the International Brigades.

Images stay in the mind. Charlie Morgan on a bright summer's morning describing the clarity of the atmosphere, looking across at white villages five or six miles away 'as if it was a big set for a Hollywood film. I was with a machine gun unit when we were told to go over the top. I remember this lovely lad — I send a pound a year to the *Morning Star* as a memorial to him — turning to me and grinning and he said "Eeh, Charlie, it's like being in the pictures, isn't it?" That was it, he was killed.'

George Aitken remembering the death of the mysterious Nathan, the ex-Guards officer: 'At darkness we dug a hole and put the body in and I gave a short funeral oration about his legendary virtues, and while I'm talking — and by this time it was practically dark apart from a cold white moon — I could hear both General Gal and Jock Cunningham sobbing. Both of them were feeling the fact that they hadn't been on good terms with this great soldier...it reminded me of the poem about the burial of Sir John Moore at Corunna... slowly, slowly, we laid him down.'

Towards the end of the war many men were taken prisoner, ending up in Spanish concentration camps. The Germans sent special teams in to practice interrogation techniques on prisoners. As well as physical torture and brutality the conditions were appalling. One volunteer, Jack Coward, survived, returning after being given up for dead, with his hair quite white. The families left behind suffered great hardship. Once it became illegal to volunteer, wives had to pretend their husbands were working away, or had left them.

I INTERVIEWED about half the then 200 or so survivors. What came across so strongly was how politically educated they had been, compared to their equivalents today. Although they left school at 14 they read avidly, went to classes, attended political meetings. They were aware. They returned to a different world. In the run up to the 1939-45 War there was no shortage of work for shipbuilders, millworkers, miners and engineers. Many fought again. Hugh Thomas says in his book that none of the working-class volunteers 'achieved any eminence'. One wonders what he means, considering the subsequent careers of Jack Jones, Will Paynter and George Aitken. Eminence as what?

Nearly 50 years later the spell still held. Sam Wilde said: 'Spain made me a working-class snob. I've had experiences of all kinds but the happiest days of my life were spent in Spain. For the first time I recognised the dignity, goodness, bravery of ordinary people.' Walter Greenhalgh said 'one lasting result was to give me a pride in my working-class origins that nothing and nobody has ever been able to shake.'

Charlie Morgan marvelled at the poverty of the people: 'I thought, my God, you were grumbling because you were on the dole. You lived like a bloody lord compared to these people. They've nothing to lose, they'll fight to the finish. I've never consciously let down my class again.' He returned and married one of his letter writers 'exchanging one kind of civil war for another...' Nan Green said 'I'll never regret it. As for George — well, he died like a bird who dies in flight, it just keeps on flying.' Bill Feeley, the bluff northerner, told me 'Spain was different... it was not only the head, it was the heart which was affected. We were affected emotionally by it and those years in Spain were the finest hours of the British Left, or the British Labour movement I saw in my lifetime. There was never anything again like Spain.'

Bob Cooney went further: 'Freedom is infectious. We went to Spain so we could defeat Hitler. Those who went to fight in Spain were the apprentices of freedom who became freedom's craftsmen.' The late Syd Quinn summed it all up. 'I want to go back there and walk down those little village streets and see the Spanish people again and pay my respects to all those fine, wee fellows who were killed over there.

'The world stopped for us in 1939.' □

This Saturday (16 November) a memorial to those who fought for the Republic in the Spanish Civil War is to be unveiled in Liverpool's Trade Union Resource Centre.

The end . . . half a million people in flight, heading along the coast road to France in January-February 1939. *Inset:* bombardment at Granollers by German planes in 1938

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POETRY

A craft to be worked at

John Lucas

The Fiction-Makers
ANNE STEVENSON *Oxford* £3.95
Extending the Territory
ELIZABETH JENNINGS *Carcanet* £4.95
A Second Skin
PATRICIA McCARTHY
Harry Chambers/Peterloo Poets £4.50
Long Road to Nowhere
AMRYL JOHNSON *Virago* £2.95
Sawdust and White Spirit
STEF PIXNER *Virago* £2.95
Dry Air
DENISE RILEY *Virago* £2.95
Selected Poems
FLEUR ADCOCK *Oxford* £4.95
Ambit no. 99

Anne Stevenson — gifted maker

IN 'MAKING POETRY', one of the more programmatic poems in her new collection, Anne Stevenson says that among other things poetry is 'The sound leading the hand'. Agreed, and that's why, at her best, she is such a good poet. Her intense relishing of experience is knowable mostly through the sounds her poems make.

It seems tedious to have to go on pointing this out, but the fact is that as a reviewer I have to work my way through endless volumes of would-be poetry where experiences — harrowing, sad, funny, unusual as they may have been to the person to whom they happened — lie on the page under a rubble of unsifted, unshaped words. In 'Two Ambitions to Remember', Denise Riley writes of 'The drive out of town/the fans of pale branches'. But what is there to remember in that? Branches don't really look like fans and besides the words don't make the kind of noise that can in any way become memorable. Compare Anne Stevenson's 'always adaptable dandelions'/brassy screws/[which] batten down tips with topsoils'/richer intentions'. The fancy is carried by the way, as you say the words, you savour the sounds they make, the lovely, comic things they make your mouth do.

Many of the poems in **The Fiction-Makers** are slight, but they are usually saved from triviality by Stevenson's gifts as a maker. She even manages to take that most boring of forms, the sestina, and fashion out of it a charming 'Epithalamium'. Charm of course becomes dangerous long before it wears thin and, although she tries to guard against it by pleading to be saved from 'Habitat and snobbery and too damn much literary ambition!', 'A Prayer to Live with Real People', the poem which this line brings to an end, seems to me a bit too charming for its own good, or for that of the people it describes; as, for example, the 16-stone ladies 'with breasts like cottage loaves dropped into lace-knit sweaters', where Beryl Cookery makes for a condescending plateful. But that's a rare fall from grace.

Among the good poems in the volume I would mention 'Waving to Elizabeth', a fittingly clever, visually imaginative tribute to the great American poet, Elizabeth Bishop; 'The Blue Pool', which also owes something to her but has the unmistakable timbre of Stevenson's rhythms and sounds; the sharper and more searching 'The Television and the Nightingale', about the redeemable woe that is in marriage; and 'Hands', which, although it has some false moments (they include a surely anachronistic use of the word 'gay' in its contemporary sense) ends with an image of piercing heart-wrenching accuracy. I'm not going to quote it, though; go out and buy the book for yourselves.

With Elizabeth Jennings's **Extending the Territory** we are, I fear, back with the kinds of experiences which ask to be taken on trust. 'But six years of my childhood are precise', she says in 'An Absolute', and goes on: 'I see the berries/ /On bushes as imperial as music,/Poised as poetry'. She may be able to, but I'm damned if I can. Nor can I summon up much interest in 'The Circuses' where clowns are said to be 'energetic' and horses 'sprightly'. And the 'untarnished marvel' of 'A Sky in Childhood' doesn't do a great deal for me, either.

When she gets beyond the world of children ('before time takes their hands/And lowers the sun' — now where have I heard that before?) matters improve, but not to any great extent. Even the pain of 'Anger' and 'Certain Lesson' and 'A Death Alive' drains away through the smooth, unvarying grid of language, stanza and metric norm. 'Will all that glowing joy, those long/Excited conversations be the past?' It seems unfair that so much raw, wounding experience should turn into verse of such vapidity, but then you feel, 'Well, but surely if she cares as much as she says she does she could have found *some* way of getting it across?'

Patricia McCarthy's **A Second Skin** would have been much improved by firm editing. Time and again her work is let down by an impossibly gawky phrase, or piece of syntax, and this is a pity because there are some good poems scattered among the kind of rueful reflections that have become almost a Peterloo trademark but which here aren't sufficiently inventive to repay the attention they demand. I particularly liked 'Willow Pattern', an ingenious meditation on the stories implicit — or discoverable — in the designs of willow-pattern plates, which becomes the more teasingly metaphoric as it goes on. I also enjoyed the sequence of poems based on her experiences in Bangladesh, especially 'Rickshaw Rider' which compares very favourably with the trishaw rider D. J. Enright wrote about many years ago now in 'The Poor Wake Up Quickly', although Enright had a sure sense of when to leave well alone, whereas McCarthy cannot resist including the kind of detail we don't really need. (Feet that 'turn and turn and turn and turn' are better *not* called 'furious'.) More hard work would get rid of this kind of mistake. I hope she goes on writing and I hope Harry Chambers, who does such good work for poetry, will sharpen his blue pencil in readiness for when her next collection arrives at Treovis Farm Cottage.

The blue pencil should certainly have been taken to the Virago volumes, **Long Road to Nowhere, Sawdust and White Spirit** and **Dry Air.** In the case of one of them, at least, it should have written 'No, not yet. No, not here.' *Dry Air* is the best of the three since, for all her banalities, Denise Riley is capable of a mordant, anecdotal verse best exemplified, perhaps, by 'Making a Liberty Belle', in which she recounts coming across a dress-pattern she cut years ago from an Annual, which instructed her to 'Tie Bandolier of White Stuff/Over One Shoulder/and under opposite, write/word "LIBERTY" in Indian/Ink.' But when you've read it once, and taken the point, what else is there to do with it? There is no great craft to such writing, nothing to make you admire it as a *poem.* The line-break between Indian and Ink, for example, is quite without dramatic surprise or point. This is writing as disposable material and although it may at first look to be claiming kinship with the free-verse experimentation of such admirable American poets as Denise Levertov and the less well known Hilda Morley, the gap between their carefully worked at measures and Riley's rough-and-ready cut ups is an absolute one.

There's an equally wide gap between Virago poets on the one hand and, on the other, Fleur Adcock, whose **Selected Poems** were reprinted last year. When they first appeared, in 1983, I was less than whole-heartedly enthusiastic about them. Rereading them, I cringe at my own obtuseness. The best of them — and that's a sizeable number — are marvellous. Make sure you buy them when you buy your Stevenson.

And, whatever you do, try to get hold of a copy of **Ambit 99.** It contains the last poems to be published in her lifetime by a most gifted poet, Madge Hales. Chatto published a volume of hers in the 1950s, but when she died earlier this year she was virtually forgotten. Yet almost to the end she was turning out work remarkable for its mixture of sly sensuality, emotional

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Fleur Adcock — revalued

vulnerability controlled by wit and ruthlessly exact observation — oh, and its craft. If Virago is anxious to publish the work of women poets why don't they undertake to do a generous selection of Madge Hales? That really *would* be a service to us all. □

Running to stay in the same place

Anthony Barnett

On Living in an Old Country
PATRICK WRIGHT with drawings by ANDRZEJ KRAUZE *Verso* £18.50 & £5.95
The Past is a Foreign Country
DAVID LOWENTHAL *Cambridge* £27.50 & £9.95

BOTH THESE BOOKS are about the past in the present — not just nostalgia, but the way the past is lived and manipulated. Neither is easy reading: Wright's is uneven and sometimes obscure, but full of intellectual and political life. His is a new and welcome voice. Lowenthal's is polished, erudite and unbearably banal. His is a kindly, yet complacent intellect.

Lowenthal's book is a lavish production. Probably, it will be reviewed widely and will sell well for Christmas. Before long it will be forgotten, a fitting outcome. I must admit that this judgment may be unfair. For some time now I have suspected that reviewers often fail to read the books they review. With **The Past is a Foreign Country** all I can say is that I *tried*. It is all about the past, about the look of the past and views of ancient and modern; it has a section on personal ageing and a survey of the arguments over 'preservation'. Lowenthal provides a cataract of examples, often memorable. Yet none of his material is thought through. It is encyclopaedic without being comparative. No assessment takes place; instead, each chapter is laid before us with portentous platitudes.

As the first opens we are told: 'The miracle of life is cruelly circumscribed by birth and death.' Apart from being untrue, this is the kind of thing one expects at a school speech day. On page 69 we are told, with gravity: 'stability and change are alike essential'. The next chapter ends: 'To be modern one must grant the ancients their place, for without ancients there can be no moderns.' In despair I flicked through to the conclusion, which begins: 'Recognizing the impact of the present on the past, we confront anew the paradox implicit in preservation.'

Every question is begged by this kind of fudge: whose present, whose past, who is this 'we'? Lowenthal even fails to notice the crucial role of nationalism in the whole ordering of the contemporary past. Of course, to do this is difficult. Patrick Wright has had a go — or rather, various attempts — at some of the big questions in the essays that make up **On Living in an Old Country**. Anyone on the Left who has a love-hate relationship with England will benefit from a study of his book.

It consists of essays that take as their starting point episodes such as the raising of the Mary Rose, the sale of Mentmore or Michael Foot's turnout in a duffle coat for Remembrance Day. There is then a rush to argument, as Wright considers how the English live in the past.

A distinction can be made between the past and history. History is what happens *before* our time and the scholarship that attempts to describe, narrate or explain it. The 'past' is more tangible, it is the thingyness of history, its smell and texture, its bits and pieces that have been kept or reconstructed. It is also the received ideas we have of our past, our 'roots', our 'greatness' or 'our ancestors'.

The past, then, is something a society possesses in the present. It is necessarily modern, in the sense of contemporary. In a telling passage Wright warns against posing 'history itself' against 'the past'. He suggests that it is somewhat futile for scholars to combat Thatcher when she lays claim to Victorian values. For such a claim is neither about nor interested in historical veracity and, thus, is almost immune to academic rebuttal. Similarly, the established institutions stage the past, Wright argues, explicitly as themselves.

The way the past is lived differs within the same society. In one of his best essays, 'A Blue Plaque for the Labour Movement?', Wright lists four different alignments towards 'the past': The Complacent Bourgeois, The Anxious Aristocratic, The Anti-traditional Technicist and The Marching Proletarian. Such distinctions are telling, not only because they are thoughtful as well as witty, but because of the intellectual effort Wright makes. He has tried to grapple with the strangeness and strengths of old England: on the one hand, by out-bidding its obsession with particularity and detail and, on the other, by applying theory and historical argument to the material, theory drawn especially from Agnes Heller.

The combination is badly needed but very difficult to achieve. Wright does not always pull it off, although the delightful cartoons by Andrzej Krauze provide intellectual relief as well as emphasis. Wright's introduction, for meeting halls around the country, winning

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example, is badly misconceived unless you seek a non-chemical substitute for Magadon.

I've space only to argue with one point he makes, against myself. He says that Thatcher does not head a government whose policy amounts only to archaism. This is true. But it was never implied by the concept of 'Churchillism' that I claimed gripped the entire House of Commons during the Falklands' War and came to end thereafter. Churchillism was a coalition mentality that combined defence of imperial institutions at home with the welfare state and full employment. It was a consensus adaption in which Labour was, so I argued in *Iron Britannia*, just as important as the Conservatives. Thatcher, however, broke from this and even used 'Churchillian rhetoric to assault the legacy of Churchillism'.

My argument might be wrong, but there can be little doubt that what the argument is about is central to any understanding of contemporary British politics. The key question is: how is Britain to be a modern country? Meaning: how is it to find its place in the contemporary world? The consensus politics of Churchillism provided one answer, and seems to have failed. Thatcherism provides another. In neither case can they be called a politics of archaism, yet both have a fundamentally archaic moment: their desire to preserve the old order. To do so, however, they have to 'modernise' it, to ensure its survival. The vicious circle of British politics is that the very instrument that seeks to modernise the country, the whole state system of elite government, does so in order to ensure its own preservation. Yet such preservation is itself the root of the country's backwardness, of its failure to fit in with the rest of the world.

Take the famous warning uttered by Harold Macmillan to the South Africans, that they should heed the winds of change. Macmillan was a perfect example of a moderniser who celebrated consumer capitalism in order to preserve the old Parliamentary regime. South Africa didn't listen to him, but the British did. Consider the metaphor, however. To bend with the winds of change...is to remain in place, is to stay rooted to the same spot. □

ERIC PARTRIDGE

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On the couch

Bill Greenwell

The Inner I — British Literacy Autobiography of the Twentieth Century
BRIAN FINNEY *Faber* £14.95

THIS IS THE first book about English (*sic*, let's assume the writer means British, as in his title) autobiography of the 20th century, claims a bemused Brian Finney. Since there is apparently no dearth of publications relating to European or American autobiography, this therefore is a trailblazer, although Finney is a most modest man, picking his words quietly, sifting his observations like sand.

Finney considers the omission of any previous study to be, as I understand it, a trick unaccountably missed by British structuralists. Their American counterparts have not been so slow off the mark. This is a plausible assumption; but Finney himself does not emerge as a structuralist, post-or otherwise.

His approach, as his study slowly reveals, is principally psychological. The selection and repression of incidents, the shaping of narrative, even the imagery used — all are turned by Finney into an analysis of the writers' psyches. He wants to know what an autobiography unconsciously betrays and this, it transpires, is not only what fires Finney's imagination. It is also, he thinks, what gives autobiography its edge. Nowhere is this odd system of value judgment more apparent than when he compares Patricia Beer's *Mrs Beer's House* with Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son*. Beer's book 'lacks the compulsive power' of Gosse's:

> To be more precise, it lacks the emotive subtext which makes Gosse's book smoulder beneath the cooling ashes of his retrospective self-control . . . Patricia Beer shows none of Gosse's sub-conscious resentment.

Sorry, Patricia, but *you will not lie still on the couch*. By now, the game was up, as far as I was concerned. Brian Finney is not shadowing his quarry; he is following its shadow.

And this is a terrible pity, since Finney's book really does expose a hole in which there is plenty of space for scholars to rub shoulders. What it would be illuminating for them to consider, however, is how the writers have ordered their material the better to satisfy their readers. An autobiography is not a novel; nor is travel writing. But the artifice involved is susceptible to the same investigation. The question should be *what makes this readable?* and not, at least not in the first instance, *what is the writer hiding?* I should learn much more from a study of John Mortimer's use of figurative language to impress the reader, than from the assertion, à propos *Clinging To The Wreckage*, that Mortimer's 'over-insistent superego' is being silenced by casting his father as a clown. It may be so, my Lord. But is the assertion that Herbert Read, whether or not a Jungian himself, associated his experience of childhood 'with the archetypal myth of Eden', really instructive? And what do we make of the impression that this association was 'largely unconscious'? How largely?

Sensibly, Finney does not get caught up in the semantic riddle *When is an autobiography not an autobiography?* The answers to all such questions are as long as bits of second-hand string. Doubtless some would quibble with his inclusion of Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London*; others would press, inevitably, for the inclusion of *Sons and Lovers*. Any interesting genre is slippery. And it was Lawrence who said, of the novel, that when you attempted to pin it down, 'it got up and walked away with the nail'. There are a lot of British autobiographies, as Finney's study shows, dodging the hammer. His shot is the first to miss the target, but he has done a considerable service by taking aim. In the meantime anyone interested in the current state of the art should get hold of *Granta 12* — and also, for all its failings, Brian Finney's book. To bring together Frank Harris, Laurie Lee, John Osborne, Storm Jameson *inter alia* is a start; and it does have a particular merit, too. It will make you want to go out and get some autobiography in. □

Run to waste

Francis Wheen

Victor Grayson: Labour's Lost Leader
DAVID CLARK *Quartet* £9.95

ALL THE PREVIOUS biographies of Victor Grayson that I know of, from Wilfred Thompson's *The Life of Victor Grayson* (Bennett, Sheffield, 1910) to Reg Groves's *The Strange Case of Victor Grayson* (Pluto, 1975), have been shamelessly hagiographical. David Clark's isn't, for which relief much thanks.

Wilfred Thompson did at least have an excuse for his adulatory tone ('His name . . . will be revered and honoured by the countless millions that shall live hereafter in the world that is to be'), in that he was writing just before the rot set in. Grayson's career thitherto had been one of success and excitement — elected to Parliament at a sensational by-election in 1907 when he was just 25, chucked out of Parliament more than once by the Speaker for demanding emergency debates on unemployment, packing meeting halls around the country, winning

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thousands to socialism through his brilliant mob oratory, and so on.

From then on, however, Grayson went into a terminal decline. He persistently failed to turn up at his speaking engagements; when he did turn up, he was often too drunk to speak; during the First World War he became a rabid jingoist and more or less abandoned his socialism; and in 1920 he disappeared altogether. Reg Groves was well aware of all this when he wrote his 1975 biography, but he skipped over most of it.

If Grayson had disappeared in 1910, when his reputation was at its zenith, rather than in 1920, how would we now remember him? As Labour's lost leader? David Clark, in spite of his book's misleading title, thinks not: 'He was not the stuff of which leaders are made'. His antagonism towards trade unions, coupled with his lack of theoretical or practical grounding in socialism, left him susceptible to failure. Clark argues convincingly that Grayson's naïvety and carelessness ensured that he was easily outmanoeuvred at vital moments. His one real political attribute was his oratory — but even this was not always put to the service of enlightenment, a point that is amply proved by Clark's full account of Grayson's belligerent activities, first as a soldier and then as orator, during the First World War. In a speech in April 1918, for instance, Grayson declared:

> We are fighting the German people, and I say that without hesitation. You may have been told we were fighting the German Kaiser and a crowd of Prussian Junkers who surround the Kaiser, but I tell you we're fighting the German race as a race.

It was a fight which he fully supported: the 'guttural Hun', he said, must be 'thrashed and then punished'. No wonder disciples such as Reg Groves have found this such an uncomfortable subject.

For all its merits, however, Clark's book has some weaknesses as well. The press release accompanying the book promises that 'issues as controversial as bisexuality and aristocratic illegitimacy are thoroughly examined for the first time', using 'important new material'. Yet Clark's treatment of these two subjects is anything but thorough. On Grayson's bisexuality, the 'important new material' is the wad of intimate letters from Grayson to a Liverpool socialist called Harry Dawson, which came to light in 1983. Disappointingly, Clark deals with them in just one paragraph.

Clark's section on the rumours that Grayson was the illegitimate son of an aristocrat is equally thin. These rumours have usually been supported only by the slivers of circumstantial evidence: that Grayson's education was surprisingly prolonged for a 'working-class' child from Liverpool; that as a boy he was dressed in Eton collars; that as an adult he had a taste for wearing evening dress and staying in grand hotels. Clark adds one interesting titbit. On her death-bed, Grayson's mother-in-law apparently claimed that Grayson was one of 'the Marlboroughs'. But Clark fails to follow this up. If it is true, it would probably mean that Grayson was the son of the 8th Duke of Marlborough, who did indeed have quite a frisky love life. If David Clark has done any research on this point he's keeping it to himself. □

FICTION

Horrid humans

Richard Deveson

Life and Fate
VASILY GROSSMAN *Collins Harvill* £15
Galápagos
KURT VONNEGUT *Cape* £9.50
The Catholic
DAVID PLANTE *Chatto* £8.95
Opening of the Mouth
ANNE DUDEN *Pluto* £3.95

IF **LIFE AND FATE** had been published in 1960, when Vasily Grossman finished writing it, he, and it, would immediately have become world-famous. But the KGB confiscated every last scrap of the manuscript, Grossman died in 1964, *The Gulag Archipelago* stole the show and now, 25 years on, one can detect sighs of barely repressed irritation in certain quarters that yet another huge volume indicting Stalinist Russia has got to be taken note of. Life and fate have been ruthlessly unfair to *Life and Fate*.

It is an impressive novel. No novel which turns 1.45kg on the kitchen scales, which introduces over 150 characters, which tries to portray the entirety of Soviet society at the time of Stalingrad, which encompasses sufferings in camps, gas chambers and shattered cities and which was to expose its author to devastating reprisals can fail to be impressive. It is a remarkable human achievement and should be hailed as such. On the other hand...

It's not so much that the characters are wooden (though plenty are), as that Grossman is maladroit at marshalling information about them. After we have read about 0.48kg, we suddenly come upon a whole collection of people whom we may or may not have met before, along with further name-droppings of people and places we are even less sure about. This is undeniably fatiguing. The reason is possibly that Grossman, for all the obvious presences of Tolstoy and Socialist Realism, was trying to do the paradoxical: to write a Chekhovian epic. At one point a character praises Chekhov, the artist of freedom and democracy, so eloquently that the author is surely endorsing him. The book's obliquity and diffuseness, the Chekhov-like attempt to make details imply wholes, end up as simply bewildering in a work of this scale.

In another sense the book's shape and moral are over-simple. When the battle of Stalingrad was in the balance, Russians found a solidarity, through doubt and fear, that was on the verge of bringing about personal, democratic free expression (Chekhov again); with victory, self-confidence returned, but so, by a bitter irony, did the totalitarian system's ability to crush dissent. This scheme is more elaborately worked out in the story of Viktor Shtrum, a Jewish physicist who finally escapes through recantation, than in parallel sub-plots of soldiers and commissars whose zeal doesn't save them from dismissal and the Lubyanka. Yet Grossman still has to rearrange the historical facts in order to fit in the anti-Einstein campaign. All the same, no other novel presents so detailed and untendentious a picture of Russia during the war. And the translation, by Robert Chandler, is magnificent.

Kurt Vonnegut is not to be caught out in the unmentionable act of letting content get the better of technique and, for three-quarters of its length, **Galápagos** sustains a clever idea with philoprogenitive virtuosity. An unlikely collection of people are shipwrecked on the Galápagos Islands, just in time to avoid being wiped out along with the rest of the human race. The islands which helped inspire Darwin's theory of evolution now become the breeding-ground for a new mutation of *homo sapiens*. But success is touch-and-go. Captain Adolf von Kleist is the only male and he is possibly a carrier of Huntington's chorea. Selena MacIntosh is congenitally blind. Hisako Hiroguchi is pregnant, but her own mother was in Hiroshima in 1946. Mary Hepburn, a retired high-school biology teacher from Ilium, NY, saves the species by hijacking some of the Captain's sperm, but the price is that evolution goes into reverse and, after a million years, humans have turned into furry, beaked and flippered catchers of fish.

Except that, for Vonnegut, this is not a price but a deliverance. The evolutionary trouble with humans is their 'big brains', which cause them not only to be selfish, tell lies and commit hubris but also to have social life, imagination, ideas, knowledge and thought. Vonnegut's misanthropy is in a way perfectly logical. The trouble with humans is that they are human, and the only way they can stop being human is to become animals. (Tough on the fish, but there you are.) As a recipe for the avoidance of nuclear catastrophe, this is unhelpful. The

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trouble with Vonnegut, on the other hand, is that he seems to believe it. His fatalism is almost total; the people who inhabit this planet are absurd, destructive puppets. This hopelessness accords all too well with the usual Vonnegut style of faux-naif catch phrases and one-sentence paragraphs which gradually take on a didactic and patronising tone; black jokes are all we are worthy of. The trouble with fatalism is that it helps bring on the very fate it dreads.

From fatalism to two seizures of solipsism. David Plante's hero Daniel Francoeur reappears in **The Catholic** and spends the book obsessed with the beautiful body of a man, Mystical Bodies and thorn-tangled hearts and the desire 'to bring down spirit into matter'. In Anne Duden's **Opening of the Mouth** the 'I' is liable to italicised outbreaks in which 'aborted moments' of her life 'linger amoeba-like in certain regions of my body, especially somewhere behind my kneecaps'. Still, with solipsism there's always one person who's truly sympathetic. □

MAGAZINES

Lit. crit.

David Berry

LITERARY MAGAZINES and journals are usually short-lived ventures. Even more than radical magazines, their publishers start off with wild enthusiasm, convinced they are offering something very special, and then run out of energy — and capital — after a few issues.

So the October issue of **Books and Bookmen** (£1.20 from newsagents), a magazine celebrating 30 years of more or less continuous monthly publication, deserves a mention. It has at least survived. Survival, however, is one of this magazine's few assets. Its extended book reviews and author-interviews have the timeless quality of a dentist's waiting-room. Worth looking out for when you have a toothache.

Which also sums up the new magazine, **Words** (£1.20 from bookshops). Even with its smarter design and more varied content — poems, some journalism, competitions — one can't quite escape the feeling that it is a magazine to be read when one has nothing better to do.

Partly because both *Words* and *Books and Bookmen* are doing so little out of the ordinary, their editorials make great claims about their uniqueness. Two literary journals which do not bother to explain themselves are **Panurge** (£1.95 from 70 Birks Road, Cleator Moor, Cumbria) and **Atlas** (£4.95 from 10 Park St., London SE1). *Atlas* is the more interesting and the more obscure. Its third 'anthology' contains stories and poems by over 30 authors, mostly in translation, including André Breton, Alfred Jarry, Pier Pasolini, that sort of person. In a short note, the editors suggest the necessity for writers to break with 'the bleak and conventional naturalism prevalent in Britain and the US' and welcome contributions '*in our field*'. God help you if you're not.

The surrealist eclecticism of *Atlas* is replaced, in *Panurge*, by good old-fashioned English pragmatism. Issue No 3 contains 12 stories by 'new writers' including one, a certain Philip Sidney Jennings, who has launched recently another literary magazine named simply after himself (**Jennings**, £1.50 from 336 Westbourne Park Road, London W11). Reading these publications — and many others like them — is a little like watching potential skiers on the nursery slope: one hopes that most will abandon the sport before they do themselves a serious injury.

It was refreshing, then, to discover this autumn three other magazines not well known outside their immediate constituency but which deserve to be. **Gay Times** (£1 from 283 Camden High Street, London NW1) started life as the semi-pornographic *Him* magazine and has now blossomed into a worthy replacement for the old *Gay News*. Each issue is simply divided between 'regulars' (including an improving news round-up, letters, fashion and classified ads) and 'features'. The latter sometimes verge on the whimsical but there is much here that entertains and provokes, for heterosexual as well as homosexual and lesbian readers.

The first issue of **New Beacon Review** (£2.50 from 76 Stroud Green Road, London N4) reflects the new interest in black writing in Britain today. A little uneven, but this mix of theory, reportage, poetry and review promises much. **Fortnight** magazine, by contrast, is now on its 228th issue. This 'independent review for Northern Ireland' is not as well known in Great Britain as it deserves to be. It publishes some of the clearest analyses of the Province's politics I've seen. A useful antidote to much of the English Left's romanticism about Ireland (50p from 7 Lower Crescent, Belfast 7). These magazines work because they have something to say beyond the desire simply 'to write'; their literary style emerges from their preoccupations and politics and, as a consequence, much of the writing is very good indeed. □

THE P.E.N. ANTHOLOGIES

The English Centre of P.E.N., in partnership with Quartet Books, will be publishing a short story anthology, P.E.N. New Fiction II which will appear in January 1987. The aim as always with P.E.N. anthologies is to encourage new writers, so approximately one-third of the volume will be devoted to *well known writers and two-thirds* to the work of the new or the less well known.

Unpublished stories (not more than two per person) written in English by British and Commonwealth writers or residents, should be sent to The Editor, P.E.N. NEW FICTION, The English Centre of P.E.N., 7 Dilke Street, London SW3 4JE by December 31st 1985.

Stories must be typewritten, have the writer's name and address on the title page and should not exceed 4,500 words. No acknowledgements will be sent and stories will not be returned. All correspondence must be accompanied by a S.A.E.

Quartet Books Limited

Footnotes

THERE HAVE BEEN more books than ever arriving lately, 50 or so being unpacked and indexed every day in mid-October. Present fashions are much conditioned by the approach of Christmas, with art books, cartoon books, humour and attempts at humour piling up. Quickest recent publishing response has been to the conclusion of the Tribunal of Inquiry into 'The Kerry Babies Case'. Joanne Hayes, telling her own experiences in *My Story* (assisted by John Barrett, Brandon, £3.95), says that it should be called 'The Kerry Garda Case'. But 'Kerry Babies' is, however regrettably, the label that has become firmly stuck to the affair and it's used as the subtitle of Nell McCafferty's vivid feminist account of the proceedings, *A Woman to Blame* (Attic Press, £10 & £3.95). Since the latter has had some distribution 'problems' in Ireland, readers might like to know that they can order it directly from the publishers at 48 Fleet Street, Dublin 2.

Useful new volumes include *The Public Tenants Handbook* and *The Private Tenants Handbook* both by Andrew Arden (Allison & Busby, £3.95 each). The prolific Mr Arden has also published a novel with the same publisher at £8.95; no prizes for guessing what *No Certain Roof* is about. A Pelican original just out at £4.95 is Caroline New and Miriam David's *For the Children's Sake: Making Children More than Women's Business* with its welcome emphasis on the 'more'.

New series of the season: Viking/Penguin's Lives of Modern Women, edited by Emma Tennant. Physically uniform — small, attractive books of 100-140 pages — and all selling at £7.95 and £2.95, the first four (*Jean Rhys* by Carole Angier, *Bessie Smith* by Elaine Feinstein, *Freya Stark* by Caroline Moorehead, *Rebecca West* by Fay Weldon) are unpredictable in tone and approach.

Most substantial new reference book: *The Social Science Encyclopedia*, ed. Adam and Jessica Kuper (Routledge, £29.95). As far as I know, there's nothing comparable around. The 900 pages go from Abnormal Psychology (c. 700 words) to Wundt, Wilhelm (c.650), passing via Cost-Benefit Analysis (c.1,150), Industry, Sociology of (c. 2,000), Liberalism (c. 1,000), Rape Avoidance (c. 300), Semantics (c. 800), Sleep (c. 1,400) and so on. Each entry is by a named expert and followed by a brief reading list. The *Everyman Companion to the Theatre* by Peter Thomson and Gamini Salgado (Dent, £15) includes a chronology and short essays but is mainly an alphabetical guide to Theatres, Genres, People (Donald Sinden shares a spread with Sophocles).

Finally, a small moan about booksellers: my impression is that books are more and more often on sale before they are published (see also recent correspondence in the *Bookseller*). This is particularly irritating on the (admittedly rare) occasions when we have a review in hand well in advance and are keeping it until the book is published. It makes you wonder what publication dates are *for*.

Gillian Wilce

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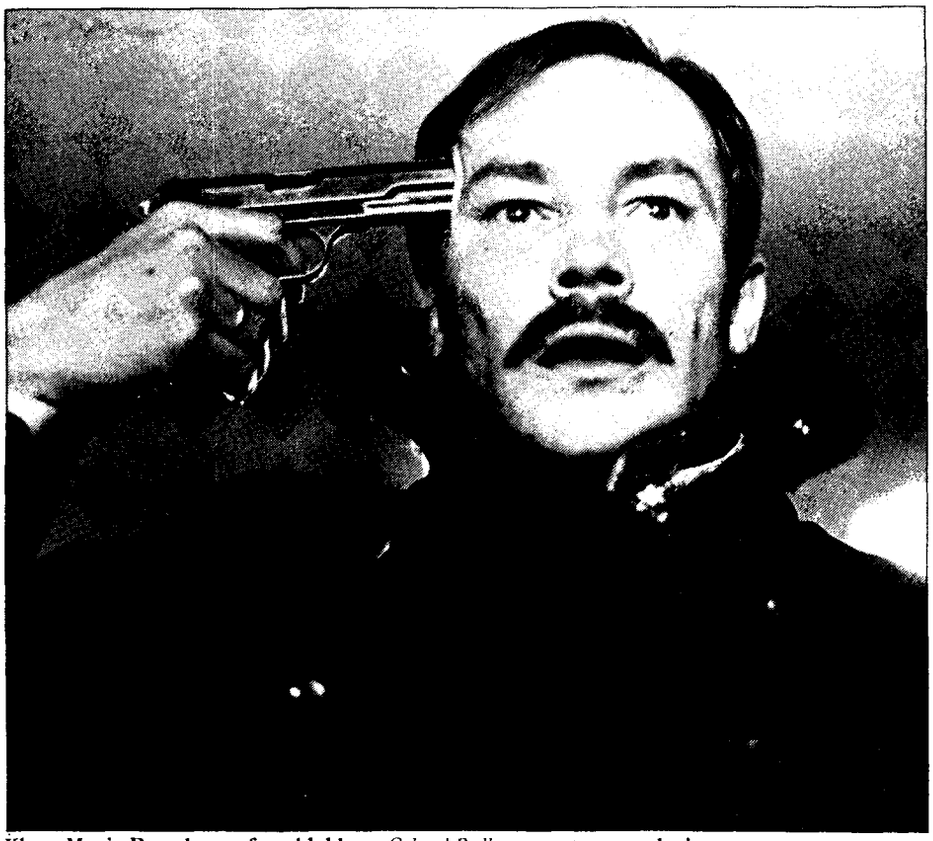
FILMS

The best of a bad business

John Coleman



Klaus Maria Brandauer, formidable as *Colonel Redl*, comes to a conclusion

My Beautiful Laundrette (15)
Screen on the Hill; Metro
Colonel Redl (15)
Cannon Premiere, Swiss Centre; Minema; from 22 November

HANIF KUREISHI may not be able to spell but he can certainly write up a storm. His needle-sharp, caustic-romantic and unrepentantly contemporary **My Beautiful Laundrette** (sic), warmly directed by Stephen Frears, embraces racism, homosexuality and Thatcherite business ethics without forcing them down our throats and, as it were, out the other end ill-digested — the all-too-frequent fate of films so concerned to make a point that they are unable to find an audience. This one may well cause a stir among our Asian communities, a risk to be run. I see it, rather, as an exemplar, the sort of independent, low-budget, truly and comprehensively *British* cinema we so signally lack, funny, honest and entertaining.

A South London Pakistani lad, Omar (Gordon Warnecke), with a well-spoken socialist father, an ex-teacher who has taken to his bed in alcoholic despair, finds work with rich uncle Nasser (splendid Saeed Jaffrey). Uncle's business philosophy is simple: 'In this damn country which we hate and love . . . you have to learn how to squeeze the tits of the system'. Apart from a grand house full of family — wife, restless daughter, handsome son into drugs and porn-videos — the squeeze has brought tough, affectionate Nasser a mistress (Shirley Ann Field), a taste for betting-shops, evictable tenants in run-down property, a car-wash concern and a dilapidated launderette. Omar is soon managing the last, enlisting as assistant an old school friend Johnny (Daniel Day Lewis), gang-leader of some National Front louts but now fed up with violence and ready to earn a bob. These two become lovers with easy, merry naturalness (in itself, a change in movies) and do the place over, with neon signs, piped music, magazines, for a gala opening, when uncle and mistress Rachel turn up to waltz a measure before Rachel graciously cuts the white tape.

But life is harder than that, inevitably. It is not just past bad memories of racist tragedies. Omar has already told Johnny his mother jumped on the railway lines last year. ('Yeah, I heard. And the trains stopped,' responds Johnny, casual-like, meaning no harm.) All the Nasser family has experience of prejudice and uncle's wife ripostes with an anti-Rachel potion which includes a dead mouse and has the poor woman showing Nasser a horrible rash and complaining, 'What's more my furniture keeps moving round the room': end of *that* affair. After ineffecual passes at both Omar and Johnny, the daughter skips too. Uncle had blindly hoped for a match with Omar there. And his flash son angrily runs down one of the NF louts, when vengeance is theirs on the dolled-up launderette, as well as on him and Johnny, who tries to intervene. Throughout, the attention to detail (Omar cutting dad's horny toenails), the liveliness of dialogue and the truth of the playing — in confrontations comic and pathetic — make this a fresh and tangy experience.

If an unfair sense of *déjà-vu* manifests itself with István Szabó's **Colonel Redl**, which acknowledges a debt to John Osborne's *A Patriot for Me* (no great one, in fact), it may partly be that the 'facts' of this real-life homosexual head of Military Intelligence at the Vienna War Ministry, of his unmasking as a spy and prompted suicide in May 1913 have been dramatised before; but there is also the formidable presence of Klaus Maria Brandauer, star of Szabó's *Mephisto* and again playing a supreme opportunist to the hilt, to compound matters. The director and his co-writer Péter Dobai are perhaps at their compelling best when laying stress on Redl's re-making of himself. Not only was there that sexual preference to disguise but young Redl was a railwayman's son. The seeds of both his love for men and his relentless *arrivisme* are sown and shown early in a rapid succession of little scenes from childhood, with the boy unseen as characters address him off-camera, then first discovered outdoing the others at push-ups at military school. A visit to the family of youthful Count Kubinyi, an erratic aristo who is later to betray him and his worship and with whose sister Katalin (stormy Gudrun Landgrebe) he is to know heterosexual love, beautifully catches the youth *learning*, at table and elsewhere.

And, just before a realistically pacing, retching and sweating build-up to shooting himself — with a gun furnished by Kubinyi (Jan Niklas) — the wheel comes full circle, with faces speaking goodbyes intimately to camera once more, Redl invisible. Set-pieces in brothel, snowy forests, ballroom lead consummately to a

Recommended viewing

A regular selection by our critic from films still doing the rounds

Dim Sun Hong Kong-born Wayne Wang's appealing music portrait (with visual bows to Japanese master Ozu) of Chinese family in freshly observed San Francisco: widowed mother, unmarried daughter, cheery uncle. Touching, humorous, astringent, a young director's invitation to 'only connect'.

Prizzi's Honour With genial fidelity to Richard Condon's triple-cross comedy of mafioso manners, veteran John Huston keeps it in *his* 'family' as daughter Anjelica pops wickedly up to net Jack Nicholson's bemused killer, love-torn Charley, from a killing new wife (Kathleen Turner).

The Purple Rose of Cairo Woody Allen's brilliantly faceted, sad-funny fantasy, as relevant to our depressed Eighties as its Depression Thirties. Actor in idiot movie descends from New Jersey screen briefly to woo movie-mad, downtrodden housewife, making chaos and whoopee. (Mia Farrow, Jeff Daniels).

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last, weary act of provoked self-betrayal. An impressive work, if surely too long. Both it and *My Beautiful Laundrette* are on display in the 29th London Film Festival, just broached, a cornucopia spilling out plenty till 1 December. □

ART

Son of Dada

John Spurling

Kurt Schwitters
Tate, until January 5, then Hanover, West Germany

ERNST SCHWITTERS, son of Kurt, was reported last week as saying that '*Blauer Vogel*', the collage reproduced on the cover of the Tate's catalogue for his father's retrospective, was a forgery. A classic or typical Schwitters is a dense mass of paper scraps (bus tickets, sweet wrappings, syllables, words and fragments of text from newspapers, brown paper, coloured paper, images from ads, etc.) skilfully assembled and sometimes partly overlaid with paint, so as to form a sort of double vibration of visual patterns and mental associations. The ephemera of every-day life, the thrown away and trampled past are recycled and redeemed by the artist's hand and imagination. That is the idea, at least, and some of the collages are indeed strikingly composed — often with a sense of energy radiating from the centre and with a fastidious eye for colour. But the historical, autobiographical, remembrance-of-things-past element is less recoverable, as Richard Humphreys in the Tate's catalogue introduction, admits:

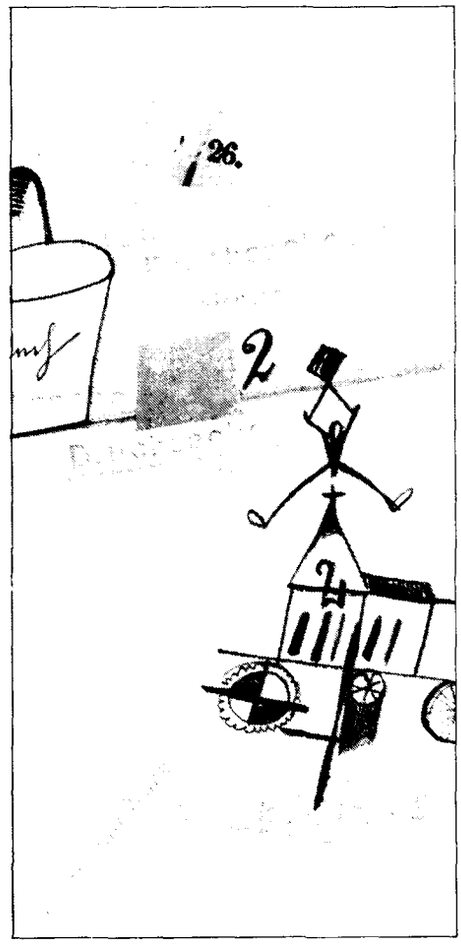
> '*Blauer Vogel*' (Blue Bird) of 1922 (cover illustration), whose title refers to a popular Russian cabaret in Berlin frequented by *Sturm* artists, highlights the lettering '*er*' '*und*' '*sie*' ('he' 'and' 'she'), includes an engraving of flirting soubrettes at a masked ball and may refer to Schwitters' liaison with the Russian artist Puni's wife. Such 'meanings' as these collages contain would have been opaque enough to a contemporary German-speaking audience, let alone to a modern English one.

The forgery in question, if it is a question, merges into the more pressing one of how Schwitters achieves his double purpose, whether his work is not, in fact, reduced by its own extreme opacity to little more than pleasantly decorative layouts. Of course, artists like Picasso, Braque and Nicholson have made collage work powerfully in its own right, in the area between still-life and abstraction. But Schwitters was not an artist of their calibre: if he fails to convey much meaning, it is because his visual patterns are not charged or clarified enough. The meaning is left to sink or swim in its own minestrone of recondite references. Mostly it sinks.

Schwitters surfaced at the end of the First World War as a '*Blaue Reiter*'-style Expressionist (there are a few of these early works at the beginning of the Tate's exhibition), but soon linked up with the Dadaists and switched to collage. However, he was swiftly rejected by the Berlin Dadaists, whose politically-conscious leader, Richard Huelsenbeck, branded him an uncommitted careerist and Expressionist. Schwitters' wit, courage and independence in then setting up his own movement called 'Merz' appears sympathetic and admirable, especially since he persisted with it to his dying day, another World War later, whereas Dada drifted into extinction almost at once and the dictatorial Huelsenbeck's only memorable achievement was the involuntary creation of 'Merz'.

But, although Schwitters published many editions of his magazine *Merz* and attracted several other distinguished artists to write for it, the movement never discovered any real centre or purpose beyond Schwitters' personal concerns and these, when one sees a large display of his work like the Tate's, emerge as essentially repetitive, self-indulgent and trivial. Behind the curtain of his visual and literary obfuscation (he also wrote and recited nonsense poetry), Schwitters actually continued to be what he had started as, a rather tame latcher-on to the movements of others, especially De Stijl and Constructivism and its offshoot, the New Typography. His enthusiasm for and expertise with this last enabled him to set up his own advertising and design agency called (you've guessed it, almost) MerzWerbenzentrale, which became a considerable success in the late Twenties.

But his *magnum opus* was intended to be the 'Merzbau' which, from 1923 until he fled from the Nazis after they had labelled him a Degenerate Artist in 1937, gradually transformed the inside of his studio in Hanover into a Constructivist/Expressionist/Eccentricist 'total environment'. Some of it — Moholy-Nagy's socks, a bottle of his own urine with flowers floating in it, the 'Cathedral of Erotic Misery' — sounds infantile from the eyewitness descriptions, the surviving photographs look more interesting, but we shall never know, since it was destroyed by our own bombers in 1944.



Detail from Dada-influenced 'Drucksache' (c.1919)

Schwitters made another 'Merzbau' in Norway, but that too was destroyed, after his death, in a fire. He began a third, in a barn in the Lake District, after the war (which he spent in Britain), but was overtaken by his own death in 1948. It seems likely that these vanished or abortive three-dimensional versions of 'Merz' were the best of him, since the many small sculptures at the end of the Tate's show, though they owe something to others, especially Arp, have a quirky presence more arresting than that of the smoothly charming pictures. □

THEATRE

Small apple

Benedict Nightingale

Dark theatres, unadventurous domestic plays — the New York stage makes depressing viewing. Could ours go the same way?

IF YOU WANT to feel better about drama in London, consider its New York counterpart. Broadway is still touchingly regarded by most Americans, including some not terminally brainwashed by myths of its glitz and glamour, as the throbbing heart of their theatre, and remains the only place where a legitimate playwright can earn an income that will let him survive with dignity in the Big Apple; but these days much of it is a multi-coloured graveyard, packed with frontages gaudily advertising shows that closed long ago. Half the 38 playhouses are dark, and only nine of those lit are tenanted by straight plays, three of them by the ceaseless Neil Simon. Mostly, Broadway means musicals, *Big River* to *Cats* to *Oh Calcutta!*

Meanwhile, Off-Broadway stumbles precariously on, filling the theatrical gap as best as dependence on the box-office, private and corporate philanthropy and the odd titbit from public sources will jointly permit. For an Englishman who has already tasted Hare's *Map of the World* and Shawn's *Aunt Dan and Lemon*, and whose stomach doesn't rumble at a revival of Sam Shepard's *Curse of the Starving Class*, the menu doesn't seem enormously enticing right now. Yet this is the sort of theatre our government is willing into existence or half-existence over here, because it's financed in very much the way our government seems to

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like. If you want to feel worse about the prospects of drama in London, consider its New York counterpart.

Still, one or two items of interest have recently managed to penetrate the minefields and mazes custom-built to deter them, principally as good a production of O'Neill's **Iceman Cometh** as I've seen. True, the play has always seemed bewilderingly overwrought to the repressed English, running (as it can) five hours as well as several gamuts of emotion, so it's not surprising that the National and RSC both failed to raise many roofs or fill many houses when they assayed it. Yet even in more congenial surroundings it takes an exceptional director and an extraordinary leading actor to win over the critics and win back a public increasingly unwilling to pay $35 a seat. Judging by the queues outside the Lunt-Fontanne, Joseph Quintero and Jason Robards Jr have achieved just that.

Whether or not *The Iceman* can be dignified as the Great American Play, Robards is surely the Great American Actor, as he emphasises with a performance of effortless authority and steadily gathering excitement. He plays Hickey, the salesman who comes for his annual beano at Harry Hope's bar-cum-flophouse not only sober, but determined to wean the assembled deadbeats from the life-lies and pipe-dreams which sustain them; and much of the time he's the archetypal hustler, a blend of medicine-man and evangelical preacher, Willie Loman and Elmer Gantry, fast-talking and flashing big phoney smiles and slapping his hands in chirpy emphasis and skipping across the stage in sudden jubilation and then stretching out his arms with a messianic rasp as he closes yet another ontological deal with yet another flustered bum. But this high-pressure optimism turns first to unease, then to self-loathing and a terrible despair, as his purported altruism fails. We leave Robards in extremis, growling and blundering and sneering and wailing in a display of beaten feeling no British actor could match, because none would dare attempt.

He and an admirable supporting cast make you burningly aware how lacking in size, seriousness, ambition and resonance American drama mainly is nowadays. *The Iceman* is as much about the psychology of the US as about that of the exemplary individuals we see: a nation riding on wishfulness, tolerating the tawrdiness of today in the expectation, often illusory, of some fuller, fatter tomorrow. The comparison with O'Neill is of course scarcely fair. Beside big imaginative gothic castles even perfectly decent dwellings are apt to look like Wendy houses. There are even one or two American dramatists — Shepard and David Mamet, to be precise — who are more than decent. But why are the horizons of so many plays roughly those of the east and west sides of at best a garden porch, at worst a toybox? Why does work that promises to be public so often shrivel into the private? Why is the American theatre so domesic?

For instance, I dropped in on a rock-opera called **News**, seemingly an attack on yellow journalism and particularly on a newspaper's sensational handling of the hunt for a mass-murderer. It wasn't the most plausible of pieces. I've worked for some ebullient editors in my time, but never one, not even Richard Crossman, who exotically wiggled his pelvis, punched the air and howled 'waaah!' when circulation jumped a notch. Nor did the show's creators seem sure whether their killer was an evil monster, a forlorn waif or an articulate critic of the press: he was anything and everything, depending on the whims of plot and score. But the evening's centre was actually smaller and sillier than that. The editor's daughter was coincidentally launching into an embryonic romance with the mad slayer. What turned out to matter was what daddy thought about that, and she thought about daddy.

Daddies seem to be proliferating Off-Broadway, too. Lanford Wilson's new **Talley and Son** admittedly purports to be no more than family drama, indeed seems determined to be little better than soap opera: a somewhat disappointing last part of his trilogy about the Talleys of Lebanon, Missouri, and (I'd have thought) not always comprehensible to those unacquainted with the other two. But Lyle Kessler's **Orphans** has picked up excellent reviews and at first seems to justify them, given the fizz and spice of its portrait of a raging young hooligan and his dopey brother, living off their wits and witlessness in the Philadelphia jungle. Then the podgy oldster they've kidnapped breaks his bonds, turns out to be in the crime business himself, hires them

BILLBOARD

Theatre

NATIONAL THEATRE 01-928 2252 Olivier (open stage) 'Pravda — A Fleet Street Comedy', 'The Real Inspector Hound'/'The Critic'. Lyttelton (proscenium stage) 'Mrs Warren's Profession', 'Love for Love'. Cottesloe (small auditorium) 'The Garden of England'. See daily press for dates and times or ring recorded information 01-928 2256.

HALF MOON THEATRE 213 Mile End Rd. 01-790 4000 Ends Sat. 7.30
SPEND, SPEND, SPEND. From 20 Nov. 8pm RA-RA ZOO — an exciting blend of circus and Theatre.

ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY
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BARBICAN THEATRE eves 7.30, mats 2.30 Thurs & Sat
LES MISÉRABLES a new musical. "Brilliant...exciting" F Times "breathtaking" Gdn. (ends Barbican 23 Nov, transfers Palace 4 Dec) (runs 3¼ hrs)
BARKER AT THE PIT eves 7.30, mats 2.00 Thurs & Sat "a most challenging season" F Times — CRIMES IN HOT COUNTRIES, DOWNCHILD, (THE CASTLE, sold out) — 3 new plays by Howard Barker. Season ends 23 Nov. *These plays contain scenes which may be disturbing.*

BLOOMSBURY THEATRE 01-387 9629 Until 23 Nov. 7.30pm Mon-Sat **JOEL HALL DANCERS** from Chicago. *'Jazz dance at its best'* Dance Magazine.

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NATIONAL SOUND ARCHIVE AUTUMN EVENTS

Thursday November 21: **Sounds From The New World Jungles** An illustrated account of recent expeditions to the rainforests of Costa Rica and Peru.

Tuesday November 26: **The Art of Thomas Tallis** Peter Phillips, conductor of the *Tallis Scholars*, examines the variety of styles and difficulties in performing the repertoire.

Tuesday December 3: **Mainstream to Dub:** West Indian Poetry in the Caribbean and in Britain. James Berry highlights distinctive aspects of writers from Eddie Brathwaite to Benjamin Zephaniah and looks at the traditions that influence them.

There will be time for discussion after each talk.

Venue: Novello House, 160 Wardour Street, London W1 at 7.30 pm
Tickets: £2/£1 concessions ***(includes free glass of wine).***
Phone: 01-589 6603 for details and bookings.

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as apprentice hoods -- and, quite suddenly, the subject is whether the wilder boy can accept this surrogate or (conceivably) real father. In fact, he ends dementedly keening over his corpse, as stricken as young Hamlet for old Hamlet.

Once again, the public, social and tolerably tough-minded has insidiously become private, psychological, sentimental. Along with penury, that's the tale of the New York theatre these days. □

DANCE

Gut reactions

Stephanie Jordan

Royal Ballet
Covent Garden
Dance Umbrella
The Place, ICA

ALTHOUGH DROPPED by Drabble from the *Oxford Companion*, presumably for his literary inconsequence, in the previous edition Horus, Egyptian god of light, is described as the symbol of renewal, son of Isis, the first practitioner of mummification. She invented the process for the eternal preservation of her husband Osiris.

It is this historic ceremony which is the basis of David Bintley's *Sons of Horus* for the **Royal Ballet**: Qebhsnuf, Hapi, Imsety and Duamutef, protectors of various items of the viscera, follow their grandmother's mourning with a dance apiece, accompanied by various concentrations of female companions. The sons are respectively falcon-headed (intestines), ape-headed (lungs), human- (liver) and jackal-(stomach), each with characteristic movement style. In the last section, 'Ritual: Journey to the Field of Reeds', the hitherto confined stage (Terry Bartlett's depiction of a mural-rich royal tomb) opens, allowing the cast to disappear into an infinite darkness, leaving Isis alone.

The construction looks solid, therefore, and the finale is impressive. Inevitably, *Horus* recalls Balanchine's similarly proportioned masterpiece, *The Four Temperaments*, but it is possibly even less inventive and stylistically more unblended than usual for Bintley: plain adagios, additive allegro constructions, heady turns and jumps strung together in complicated combinations. You miss nothing by concentrating on the soloists and ignoring the busy background groups and their repetitious canons. Alas, too, for Bintley, where Balanchine had Hindemith, he has Peter McGowan's new suburban eclecticism.

But a Royal Ballet evening of the highest quality was provided by Elizabeth Platel, our first view of her Aurora, the *Sleeping Beauty*, demonstrating elegantly and musically her emergence from *ingenue* to crown princess, especially thrilling in sudden attack and poise at climaxes. Her Prince, Jonathan Cope, made more sense of his rôle as the work progressed, yet my contention that, of any British male dancer since Dowell, Cope could be the true *danseur noble* is constantly disappointed by his slack phrasing and bumpy reactions to music.

Julyen Hamilton and Kirstie Simson return to this year's **Dance Umbrella** with *Agatha & Jimmy*, billed as 'performance dance' and continuing to explore the particular excitements of an improvised content. Narrative is confined to words on heroes or ornithology, a film depicts a crowded concourse, props include cloths, screens and frames adapted to various purposes. At one point, Hamilton wears and discards two suits and two pairs of shoes. The humour is impish and the dancing by turns feather-light and earthy, almost raw. Simson and Hamilton, like a pair of *jongleurs*, their movement sometimes fulfilling tasks, sometimes just playful, create theatrical magic from their surroundings.

Improvisation in dance and from available resources, chat, song, music, props, is equally important to Katie Duck. For her Group O at the ICA, *The Orange Man* originates in a 'line of events' and 'subject matter' from which the five participants enlarge freely. The points of control within the free sections are skilfully concealed so that the texture is seamless, with only one major change of scene within 75 minutes. Thus we move from a chilly family party of toys, playing cards and games — the atmosphere of a nursery — using the normally backstage area, to a movement scene at the black draped front. Later, a real tree is wielded on stage — probably an example of neighbouring St James's contribution to the *objets trouvés*. Tristan Honsinger's chamber music, too, is improvisational, often witty, combining with and guiding stage action. Duck is further assisted by two remarkable male performers: Alessandro Certini, with unique, simian powers of muscular control, and Frans Poelstra, part beanpole, part insect, very tragicomic.

The process rather than the successful outcome of her method is more obvious with Extemporary Dance Theatre's own Duck work, *On the Breadline*. Versatile though they are, you sense that Duck is cramped by the need for closer guidance of a repertoire company handpicked for many purposes rather than hers specifically. The music and design are also more painstakingly set. Untypical then, but it is full of her distinctive humour, her multiplicity of simultaneous activities, the Duck one-liner (improvised back-chat, not as easy as it sounds). The series of dovetailing events revolves around the preparation for a fighting match that never happens and it suits well the vibrant personalities of Extemporary, notably the charismatic Edgar [illegible]an and Annelies Stoffel, who display polyglot skills to rival the Florence-based Group O themselves.

Extemporary's programme is brilliant and a fine testimony to the particular and peculiar qualities of the company. Richard Alston launches them with *Cutter*, a predominantly racy series of abstract solos, duets and groups to a stop/start score by John-Marc Gowans. The piece is also a reconciliation of dissonance (interrupted motion, karate attack and drastic lighting shifts) with qualities that are easy on eye and ear, as in the sinewy opening phrases and weight-indulgent moves in the core duet. As the plangent music of the opening returns, the work finds its peace. □

Pain in the arse

Bob Cant

SINCE RONALD Reagan's operation, it has become acceptable to discuss publicly the functions of the rectum. Previously, apart from the innuendo of fourth-rate TV comedians, they were banished to the realm of the unspeakable. For people such as myself this was a triple oppression.

First, like everyone else, I was denied the right to discuss my specific experience of the universal function of defecation; second, as a gay man, given to occasional participation in anal intercourse, I was denied the right to discuss what had become, after many years of doubt and guilt, a major source of sexual pleasure; third, as someone suffering from an inflammatory bowel disease for even longer than I had identified myself as gay, I was denied the right to explain verbally how and where I was experiencing pain. There were private spheres for consenting adults to discuss all these functions, in suitably hushed tones, but the public ear was always deemed too sensitive.

In 1982 I developed extensive perianal abscesses as a result of my illness and, while I was in London's excellent St Mark's Hospital, discovered that there was an association for people suffering from my illness. Imagining that one of its functions must be as a self-help group, I joined. The abscesses had considerably curtailed my sexual activity and damaged my whole sexual and social self-image. I thought that it would be valuable to meet other gay men in a similar position to myself so that we could talk over how we were dealing with our problems. I was also concerned, because of AIDS, about the side-effects of some drugs that were being prescribed to people with bowel diseases. I sent off a letter to the association's newsletter, suggesting that I be allowed to set up a gay group.

Unfortunately, the newsletter was then produced by a pre-Freudian man who combined the characteristics of Attila the Hun and Joe Stalin. For a long time, he simply refused to respond to my request. I diluted it but still he was silent, trying not so much to write me out of history as to ignore me out of it. After some politicking on my part, he deigned to reply. But for him the unspeakable was not only the rectum; it was also gayness.

In dealing with my request, he managed to write a whole letter without once mentioning the words 'gay' or 'homosexual' or whatever pejorative term passed through his mind when he thought about people like me. The letter included such gems as 'the social side you are putting can be met through the Press which involves itself with that aspect of social life'. Did he mean the gay press? And he concluded, 'Letters published are chosen to be of interest to a majority of members of both sexes.' I was not

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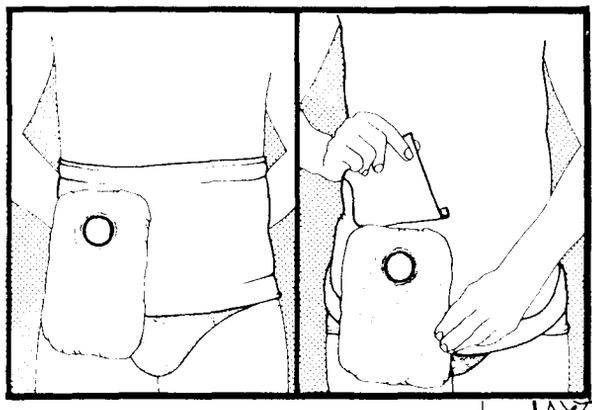
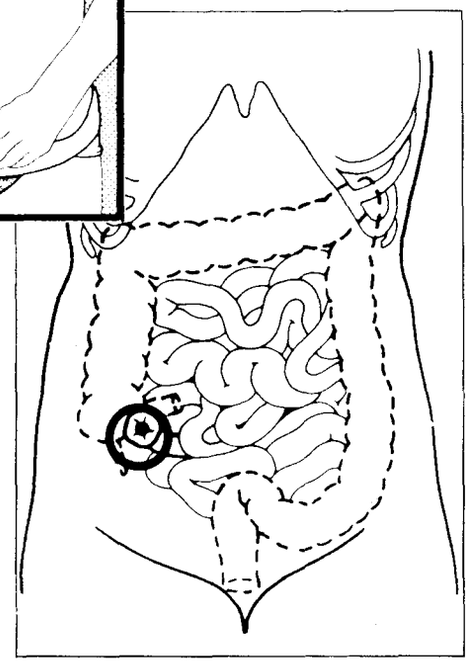


Life after ileostomy — below, the new outlet from the small bowel and, left, the post-operative equipment



sure how he could tell who would and who would not be interested in my letter but I felt that, on his terms, only when patriarchy and compulsory heterosexuality had been overthrown would my letter be published. I resolved to find a quicker way of contacting gay men with similar health problems and withdrew from the organisation less than gracefully.

In terms of my social isolation it came almost as a relief when the consultant at the hospital recommended that I have my rectum and my colon removed. I had been in excruciating pain for months and, not yet 40, my world was increasingly confined to home, work and belated visits to a naturopath. I was, however, still worried about my sexual identity and unwilling to agree to becoming a sexual dinosaur. I wanted to talk to another gay man to find out if there was life after an ileostomy. I contacted the Ileostomy Association* and they were positively lyrical in their offers of support for me. Within 24 hours their Sexual Advisory Service phoned me with the phone numbers of three gay men with ileostomies.

'Now,' she said, 'there is one very nice man but he never seems to be in...'

'That's promising,' I thought. 'He must be out having a good time.'

'He lives in Belfast,' she continued.

As I took down his phone number, it occurred to me that there might be lots of reasons, other than frequenting the gay scene, why he might not be at home. An activist in the IRA? An out gay activist in the IRA with an ileostomy seemed unlikely, but at least it suggested that you would not be housebound. I rang him and, of course, he was not in. The next one I rang was a less socially-contentious dentist from Penge. Life with perianal abscesses, he agreed, was hellish; life with an ileostomy, he assured me, was like winning the pools, emotionally and energetically. That set my mind at rest. Five days later I had the operation.

The week after that was hard. I was revolted by the thought of food. I was overwhelmingly depressed. Moreover, I had a phantom rectum which was just as demanding and anxiety-making as the biological one had been. But within three weeks I was on the road to recovery. I had put on weight and learned to cope with the vagaries of the ileostomy bag. Those weeks were also marked for me by the care and love which I received from countless visitors — mostly gay men and work colleagues. My status as someone without a nuclear family attracted the interest of my co-patients. One of them remarked to me, 'Your friends, they must all be teachers; they dress so funny.' I nodded and smiled. When the day came for me to go home, I was provided with massive supplies of ileostomy bags, creams and other wherewithal for my new life. Among these supplies were a few, small, less cumbersome mini-bags, 'for swimming and intimacy'.

Nine months later, I feel better than I have done for years. I take better care of myself as a matter of course. I go swimming every day. I am a sexual being once again. And now, rectumless, I feel able to come out as such in the *New Statesman*. Thanks, Ron. As far as I am concerned, this shift in public language has been your greatest achievement as President. □

**The Ileostomy Association, Amblehurst House, Woking, Surrey GU24 8P2.*

Reprinted from the Ileostomy Association Journal Autumn 1985

Naseem Khan

Pipe up

IT FEELS LIKE stepping into another world, walking into the back room of Alnwick's Globe Inn. At the front it's all noise and disco-flash but penetrate a bit further and a very different sight meets your eyes. The room is full of people, though not crowded. In the middle sits a knot of musicians, steadily augmented as more and more sidle in through the door. It's not disco, but folk and Northumbrian folk; there are fiddlers there and a couple of singers and a concertina player and above all — the reason why I am there — players of that most ravishing instrument, the Northumbrian smallpipes.

Now it would be tempting to see all this as an allegory, and why not? Folk music sedately shut up in a back room, ignored by the hoi polloi of contemporary life, ghetto culture etc. etc. And, since this is the picture a lot of people secretly hold of folk, it would carry conviction. However, if you were to stick around till the following day, you would realise how partial, simplistic and, indeed, wrong a view this is. Friday night in the Globe Inn was an informal curtain-raiser for the next day's Northumbrian Gathering. An annual event — a competition — it provides clear evidence that folk music (and the pipes) occupies a real place in regional life. They are not an excuse for townies to get together and pretend to be country people.

There's little preciousness, for instance, to be found at the Duchess's School in Howling Lane where the competitions are to be held. It would not be true to say that Alnwick is pounding on the doors, but there is a steady stream of people of all ages arriving, for, although the competitors turn out to be predominantly young, they have brought parents and grandparents — often players themselves — with them. Other older players from the night before's Globe Inn ceilidh are there simply to see what the score is. There are five sections — for accordions, fiddles, an instrumental pair, an original composition and of course the Northumbrian smallpipes: an instrument remarkably little known off its own patch. To most people, it suggests simply the Scottish bagpipes and is a signal for closed minds, at least south of the border.

These pipes are, however, a very different matter: different in sound and different in technique. The bag, which looks like the long puffed-up body of a goose, is held under the left arm. Strapped on to the right side of the body, and opened and closed by the pressure of the right elbow, is a small bellows, which feeds air into the bag. This emerges via the many-keyed 'chanter', a closed-end pipe, and the slender drone pipes that also stick out from the bag, like a sheaf of porcupine's quills. The player blows nothing at all (and sometimes can look oddly detached from the instrument). The sound is a distinctive one: sweet, reedy, delicate. The

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drone harmony (from three to six drones), light and subtle, lies behind the melody in the way that the *tampura* in Indian music provides an unobtrusive anchor for the major instruments. It's domestic rather than military, for shepherds rather than for pipe majors, for social dances more than for battlefields. With ups and downs, it has an unbroken history of over 300 years.

At present, it is, by general agreement, on an upswing. Time was, said Joe Hutton — one of the premier exponents of the smallpipes and the Gathering's judge — when every time he entered for a competition he would meet the same few players. This year's Gathering (the 46th consecutive year) had players coming up from Cambridge, Lancashire and the South Coast to join the core of local players. Orders from smallpipe maker, David Burleigh, have grown steadily, from all over the world. Indeed, one of the reasons for the healthy state of the field must be the existence of Burleigh and his fellow makers. Accordions have always been evident because the intruments have been accessible: not so with the smallpipes, family heirlooms that might drop out of circulation for generations at a time. There is, of course, a cachet about old pipes. Joe Hutton's date back to 1865 and, by a nice coincidence, are the very set he heard played when, as a child, he was first fired by the music of the Northumbrian pipes. The old ones, with their ivory and silver drones, are exquisite. But Burleigh's new ones — blackwood and brass — have the advantage of being both handsome and financially possible. A seven-key starter set (more advanced pipes have 17 keys) costs a very reasonable £250. With these available, players and classes have increased and standards, said Hutton, are higher than he could remember.

By the evening, the audience for the Northumbrian Gathering — respectable enough during the day's competition — had swelled. The venue also had changed, from Howling Lane and the Duchess's School to Alnwick Castle. The Dukes of Northumberland are traditional patrons of the smallpipes. They have their own piper (as does the Mayor of Newcastle) and they give house room to the concert and country dance with which each Gathering ends. It was a fine evening that presented folk music as a living delight, not something borrowed for the night from the museum. It wasn't all Northumbrian folk. There was excellent Irish folk dancing from a group from Newcastle, and the near-octogenarian Willy Scott, the border shepherd, with a tremendous unaccompanied ballad and a long ironic poem. But it was the local work that stirred the audience the most — the bouncy 19-piece Border Hills Band, Colin Ross on the fiddle, and a trio comprising Joe Hutton on Northumbrian pipes, Will Anderson on Moothie (mouth organ) and Willy Taylor on fiddle: all three of them retired shepherds. It wasn't the new stuff (though the pipes have been adapted) but the good old well-loved reels and hornpipes and wonderfully haunting slow airs that can take your breath away with their beauty. As the trio played on, I heard a funny quavery sound. I was sitting at the end of a row of several extremely old rug-wrapped ladies. Looking along it, I realised what it was: the old ladies singing along. □

TELEVISION

Hugo Williams
Die as cattle

LESS WELL-PUBLICISED and scheduled than Saturday's **Lions Led by Donkeys** (C4) was another hour-long rehash of WW1 called **Gone for a Soldier** (C4) on Sunday afternoon. Written and directed by women — Lyn MacDonald and Tina Wakerell — it was if anything the more horrifyingly vivid of the two. Every year the grotesque plague inflicted on the young males of that period in the name of some distant family squabble looks more transparently illegal. Patriotism in that 'somnolent summer' of 1914 was the trick that got our boys into the cattle trucks. 'All we want's a bloody gun' went one of the songs and poems ironically used in the film. The lack of a shroud/uniform was a sore point for men swaggering away with their 'pals', but the broom handles they had to drill with were appropriate enough to their final destination as dust in unmarked graves.

The film included the most alarming front-line footage I've ever seen, fictional or otherwise, of men walking slowly into machine-gun fire, their rifles held above their heads in the awkward manner suggested by their leaders, getting hit and getting up, only to get hit again and fall down dead.

'He told us that after the barrage it would be easy', said one survivor, in *Lions Led by Donkeys*, 'as if we were going for a walk in the park. After the barrage we all had our tails up. We thought that nothing could have survived it.'

The British guns were wheel-to-wheel for 18 miles on the Somme. The week-long barrage could be heard in London. But the Germans had merely withdrawn to deep concrete bunkers complete with electric lights. When the shelling was over, the blowing of British mines in no-man's-land was a sign to them that the big push was on and they had about ten minutes to return to the surface and remount their machine guns in time to greet the walking-dead British. 'The bombardment seemed to have had no effect whatever. I put my survival down to the fact I was first over the top and got to the German front line before they were ready.'

Another veteran pointed out that they couldn't have run if they wanted to: they had 66lbs of equipment to carry. 'We should have been mules. We should have been mules.'

The film re-visited the mist-laden battlefield. 'The last time I was here I was 19,' said Victor Rand, standing in the visible remains of his old trench. 'This is what they call a traverse. The fire-stop ran along here — a quick jump over the top if you had to go forward...' The sight of a restored German machine-gun, the first weapon of industrialised war', still sends a shiver down the spine: a huge, efficient 'cutting machine' designed for 'automatic killing'.

In the update on P.C. Olds's **The Visit** to a hospital in New Orleans (BBC1) we learnt that 2,500 people in America have already been fitted with the 'Roy Douglas brace', a chest-to-toe electronic circuit through which a patient can fire electrodes into his nerveless legs. 'Basically it gives me a kick up the backside,' said the gallant Olds, first from Britain to receive the brace and looking like a wired-up but ecstatic Frankenstein's monster as he took his first strut on the parallel bars. 'Cockney saint' Roy Douglas insisted that this was an electronic band-aid, not a cure. However, a pretence at normality is no more than many of us achieve in a lifetime, so perhaps what he has will become the real thing in due course. In the meantime his fiancée notes that she talks differently to him now, not 'down' any more, since he learnt to stand again.

Appearing on the **South Bank Show** (ITV) to trail further his *Journals* and *Collected Poems*, Sir Stephen Spender looked and spoke at 76 as though he might one day be bringing us his memories of Thom Gunn and Ted Hughes, deceased.

For the time being, however, he is still busy sappering away under the awful W.H. Auden, an undergraduate 'authority' in his green eye-shield, telling everyone what to be in life. 'Writing is when nothing happens,' said Spender, before correcting his mis-remembering of Auden's riposte to Yeats's fears that one of his plays might have encouraged young men to go and die. 'As a teacher, Auden taught young men that they should fight fascism... Yes, I do have doubts about him going to America. I do...' Spender giggled slightly at the thought of the same criticism being offered to Isherwood, a pacifist and a tragic figure 'who was always having to buy suits for these boys'.

Spender's giggle is perhaps one of the last links we have with Café Royal society and the remnants of Bloomsbury, which he admired for its willingness to be serious and funny at the same time.

'Everyone wanted to go to Spain,' he told Bragg, speaking of the Civil War. Bragg demurred: 'Everyone from a very small band, I think one should stress.' 'Yes yes,' giggled Spender, outflanking any misconception one might have had while simultaneously re-establishing his own ground with the viewer, 'a very small band really.'

Invited to join the CP 'because they wanted people who didn't agree with them but were in sympathy', he said yes 'because I was flattered. I should have said no. I've suffered all my life from an inability to say no.' The tragedy of his generation, he explained, was that when the Communists came to power 'many of us found we had lost our freedom to protest.'

Speaking of his *Journals*, he wondered aloud why he had had such resistance to writing poems. 'I often feel more interested in a journal entry on a subject than in the poem. Now there's a handle to the critics...' I suppose someone like myself writing about his TV comments on his journal entries about poetic subjects and inspiration is the ultimate displacement of 'the original idea that writing a poem has to try to recover', but I'm not sure I agree that 'criticism of poetry should only be spoken' or even that 'once it is written down it has a kind of permanence'. □

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Weekend competition

No 2899 Set by Diana Eden

Could we have extracts from obituaries (of fictitious people, please) which, while apparently oozing respect, admiration, etc, manage to convey how very little the world will miss the deceased? '('Lady Alicia's high spirits were quite undimmed by old age; even on the morning of her 95th birthday she was making her housemaids apple-pie beds . . .') Max. 120 words by 29 November.

No 2896 Set by E.O. Parrott

Publishers' letters rejecting works that are now considered to be classics.

Report By Ernest Oswald fflap

In what unattractive times we do live. With a handful of refreshing exceptions (and those, by and large, from the female sex) the reasons that you gave your publishers for rejecting *Robinson Crusoe* etc. related not to literary failings but to lack of *commercial viability.* Are publishers really so devoted to Mammon? I dare say you're much more *au fait* with them than me, but it does seem terribly distasteful. Not to mention short-sighted. Still — special mentions to Alison Prince, Peter Norman and Ffion Owen (though the latter's rejection of *Le rouge et le noir* did tax my poor, schoolboy French) and twelve sovereigns each to the authors of the letters below.

Dear Mr Jerome,
I am sorry to say we find your *Three Men in a Boat* too slight a piece and that, lacking love interest, it would not appeal to a wide generality of readers. While the absence of any detectable plot might not be a disadvantage if the novel were aimed at one of the larger literary prizes, we fear the mundane, non-exotic setting would debar its consideration. We suggest you slightly amend the book so that they sail up the Amazon, or the Nile, encountering three female explorers. There should be plenty of suffering and privation, as well as explicit sex. The climax of the book could well be when starvation forces them to eat that damned dog.

C. Fever

To D. Alighieri, Esq.
From Romance Literature Inc.

Well now, 'Abandon hope all ye who enter here' does not strike us as the *best* way to welcome the ingénue reader into your fascinating story of everyday life in Tuscany. And *Inferno* does rather have overtones of a disaster-movie. Besides which, our devoted readers, though now prepared to consider broader relationships than the straight heterosexual, will not be amused by the hero's triangular obsession with a dead antique poet and an equally dead nine-year-old girl. Paolo and Francesca do have possibilities, however, and could be expanded into one of our 'Fourteenth Century Heart Warmers'. Incidentally, your word processor has justified your text into three-line sections with rhymes. Please adjust.

John Purkis

Dear Mr Kafka,
Thanks for submitting *The Trial* but I'm afraid we can't handle it in its present form. I read 300 pages and still no crime had been committed! Books with a trial setting are always popular, so don't give up, but you have to observe the rules of the genre. Have your character be accused of *something* (a multiple axe murder, perhaps) and I suggest you have him represented by a smart, wisecracking attorney (let's face it, the book is pretty short on laughs). In the last chapter, the attorney explains to his client how he turned the tables on those faceless bureaucrats and got an acquittal. Good luck with the re-write!

Tony Pastor

Dear St John,
An interesting 'though familiar tale. You probably know that other writers have rushed out their versions; while yours has the edge for literary polish, one or two of the shorter, snappier accounts hold more appeal for the younger readership. The average nomad-in-the-saddle prefers a straightforward family saga to a philosophical discussion of the beginnings of language. He or she wants to know who begat whom (with details), not to struggle with semantics. If you have anything on Royal Families I should be interested.

D. A. Prince

Dear Mr Lawrence,
Thank you for *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* which we return. Frankly, its plot is occasionally improbable.

1) Is the lady not more likely to have seduced the workman?

2) Would not she have shot her husband and blamed it on the workman?

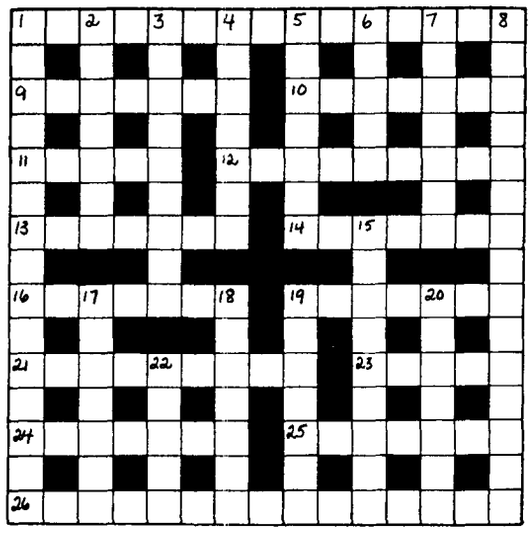
3) Would not they have contracted quite terrible chills during their romp in the rain?

We advise you to study the work of our up-and-coming Miss Christie. Her whodunnits are much more mysterious. We rather guessed it was Mellors on his first appearance. Incidentally, some of the dialect is confusing, restricting potential sales. Was John Thomas a Chartist?

Will Bellenger

Weekend Crossword 1499

PRIZES: £5 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1499, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, by first post 26 November.



Name_____

Address_____

ACROSS

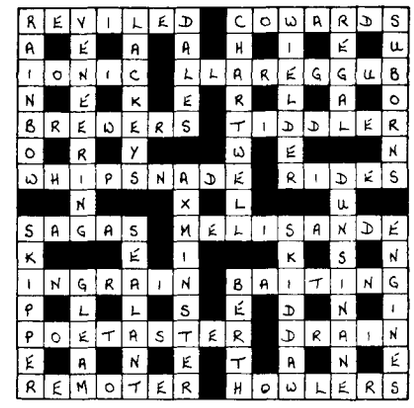
1. This philosophy is not one involved with materials (15)
9. A trail falsely laid leading to a means of flight (7)
10. Friends created when the sign of spring fades away (7)
11. Graduate after drink and dance (5)
12. Deluded person who confuses piano with a car (9)
13. The elite came first although not sober (7)
14. Man doubles with a plant (7)
16. Brief of the an amateur about to study (7)
19. Withdraw although not handicapped (7)
21. Patriot with a licentious heart (9)
23. A crude effort is put to shame (5)
24. The cricket ball which hits point on the nose? (7)
25. Bird covering exploit with girl (7)
26. Royal accommodation is kept separate in announcements (5,10)

DOWN

1. They know about people turning north amid defenders (15)
2. I am surrounded by the different claims of religion (7)
3. One follows a boy into the lake for cover (9)
4. Shut in when the department goes back without a strike (7)
5. African country puts one into a liberal age (7)
6. Forest in which the keeper is beheaded (5)
7. The tail in one transformed into the beginning (7)
8. Sound effects when I talk during background noise before writing after a servant (5,4,6)
15. True adult in business gives warning of disaster (4-5)
17. Bad county or strange town (7)
18. Defensive mechanism of old German during harvest (7)
19. Those following in the second row are firmer (7)
20. The debate is a prominent feature after refreshments (5-2)
22. Dip for a man at the club (5)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1497



Prizewinners to 1497

Pat Grout (Swansea)

Mary & Chris Pearce (Lincoln)

John A. B. Petrie (Aberdeen)

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Further information may be obtained from **Mr G.P. Allen, Secretary, Judith E. Wilson Fund, Faculty of English, 9 West Road, Cambridge, CB3 9DP,** to whom applications, containing a *curriculum vitae* should be sent by **13 December 1985.** Applicants should clearly state whether they wish to be considered for both posts or only one of them. Any correspondence should make clear to which post it refers.

MEETINGS

THEOSOPHY: S.a.e. for free pamphlets, book list, programme of activities. Sunday 17 Nov. 8 p.m. Commemoration 'The Theosophical Movement'. ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2 3AL.

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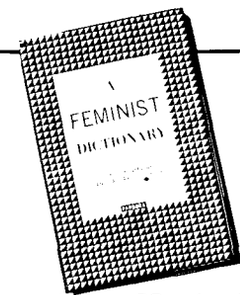

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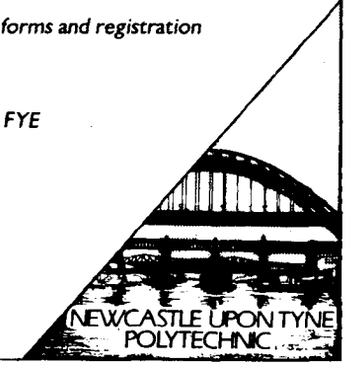

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AGENDA

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SAT 16 NOV

IRISH FREEDOM MOVEMENT. National Conference. 'Ireland: Behind the Wall of Silence'. Workshops on: The History of the War; Censorship; Solidarity. Manchester Polytechnic Students Union, Oxford Rd, Manchester. From 11 p.m. Details: I.F.M. 01-729 0414. Call this number for transport.

SAT 16-SUN 17 NOV

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MON 18 NOV

'BENEATH THE WHITE COAT': seminars on science and politics organised by the **British Society for Social Responsibility in Science.** This week **Joe Schwartz,** Author *'Einstein for Beginners'*, 'IS THERE A POLITICS OF PARTICLE PHYSICS?' 6.30 p.m. Adam's Arms, Conway Street, London W1 (tube: Warren Street).

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TUES 19 NOV

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WED 20 NOV

LABOUR LAND CAMPAIGN: Labour's Economic Policy — Jobs, Industry, Land. GLC County Hall, SE1. 8 p.m. Speaker Henry Neuberger. Information pack available £1.00. Contact Kay Knights 01-267 2245.

THURS 21 NOV

CIVIL LIBERTIES & THE NUCLEAR STATE. Speaker: Duncan Campbell, *New Statesman.* Public meeting organised by Golders Green & Hendon CND, St Albans Church Hall, West Heath Drive, NW11. Opposite Golders Green Station. 8 p.m. Info: 01-458 4369.

'REFORMING TORY LABOUR LAW', a talk by Lord McCarthy at 6.15 p.m. in Committee Room 3A in the House of Lords. All welcome. Organised by the Society of Labour Lawyers.

SAT 23 NOV

LOCAL GOVERNMENT & SOCIALISM. A day of debate and discussion presented by *Marxism Today* and London Communist Party. Clapham Community Project, Venn St., SW4. (Clapham Common tube — Northern Line). Fee 50p. 25p unwaged. Cheap lunch available. Creche, limited access but assistance available.

TUES 26 NOV

SUPPORT MAIRE O'SHEA and protest against 'Prevention of Terrorism' Act. Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., WC1. 7.30 p.m. With Dr O'Shea, Clare Short MP, Geoff Bell, Jeremy Corbyn MP. Organised by Socialist Society, 01-734 8501. Admission 50p.

TUES 26 NOV — WED 27 NOV

DEMOLISH DIVIS — an exhibition showing why Belfast's Divis Flats are called 'the worst housing in Europe'. 10.00 a.m. - 6.00 p.m. Bradshaw Room, 17 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1. (Enquiries: TCPA 01-930 8903).

SAT 30 NOV

SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF LABOUR HISTORY Autumn Conference. RELIGION AND THE PEOPLE. Birkbeck College, University of London. All Welcome. Admission £1. Enquiries to: David Englander, Faculty of Arts, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA.

WED 4 — THURS 5 DEC

NEW FORMS OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT. TCPA Annual Conference to be held in Swansea. Details: Sally Scarlett, TCPA, 17 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1. 01-930 8903.

TUES 10 DEC

CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON LABOUR'S ARTS POLICY. Speaker: Norman Buchan, Shadow Spokesman on Arts. 8 p.m. Berkshire Shire Hall, Reading (off junction 11, M4). Organised by Berkshire & South Oxon Fabian Society.

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CHESS

Russia still rules — with Kasparov

THE CANDIDATES tournament in Montpellier went much the way the Soviet contingent would have wished. Three Russians — Yusupov, Vaganian (strictly speaking, an Armenian), and Sokolov — occupied the first three qualifying places, whilst Tal and Timman are now engaged in a six-game play-off match to see who takes the fourth. It's a great pity that either of these two should have to be eliminated. They have Spraggett of Canada, the Commonwealth champion, to thank for the necessity of their further ordeal. After a dreadful start in which he lost six games in a row the Canadian was doomed to finish at the bottom of the tournament table. But his pride hauled him out of the doldrums and in later rounds he became a dangerous force — as both Jan Timman and Mikhail Tal will tell you.

Nigel Short scored just under 50 per cent, having been more or less in the middle of the pack throughout. Not a very exciting result, but it does show that he is ready to compete with super-GMs of 2600+ Elo rating. For example, he beat Portisch in the last round.

Boris Spassky had ups and downs, the ups including a good old King's Gambit with the aid of which he rapidly demolished Yasser Seirawan. For once Korchnoi had mostly downs and was never in serious contention.

I must thank Jon Speelman, there as Korchnoi's second, for drawing my attention to the following game in which the Cuban GM tries to catch Zoltan Ribli out by launching into the wild Alatortzev Variation:

Ribli-Nogueiras, Montpellier 1985, Round 13. QGD, Semi-Slav. 1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. c4 e6 4. Nc3 c6 5. Bg5 dxc4 6. e4 b5 7. e5 h6 8. Bh4 g5 9. Nxg5 Nd5!? This is the Alatortzev move. Black sacrifices the exchange with crazy complications. He doesn't have to: 9...hxg5 10. Bxg5 Nbd7 11. exf6 Bb7 12. g3 is an unresolved debate. **10. Nxf7 Qxh4 11. Nxh8 Bb4 12. Qd2** The big question in the Alatortzev is whether this or 12. Rcl is the strongest counter. **c5 13. dxc5 Nc6 14. 0-0-0 Nxe5 15. f4! Qxf4 16. Qxf4 Nxf4 17. Nxb5 Rb8 18. Nd6+ Ke7 19. Nxc4 Nxc4 20. Bxc4 Bb7 21. Rhf1 Bxc5 22. Rxf4! 1-0.** For if 22...Be3+ 23. Kb1 Bxf4 24. Ng6+ wins easily.

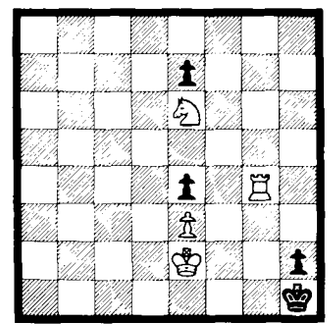
Since Ribli consumed only 20 minutes on the clock for the whole game, he must have prepared all this in advance. His 15. f4! certainly improves on previous tries (15. Be2, 15. g3 and 15. Qe1), and it would not be too surprising if this weird line were to be definitively refuted.

Meanwhile, back in Moscow, things looked hopeless for Karpov. He was two games down and to all appearances psychologically out. Perhaps he would abdicate with quiet draws in the hope of better luck in the return match.

Not a bit of it! You don't get to be world champion without being pretty tough, and when Kasparov give him a chance he hit back hard in game 22. One down, two to play. In game 23 Kasparov got a promising position out of the opening, but Karpov wriggled out. So it was all down to the last game. Karpov had to win to keep his title. A brutal, scrapping game ended in a wild flurry. Karpov's king was in a fatal check. His reign was over. So Gary Kasparov becomes the youngest champion ever at the age of 22 years and 210 days. Analysis of the historic games 22 and 24 next week.

Problem

White to play and mate in 5 moves. Easy — so long as you see how to release the stalemate.



Solution

1. Ng5 e5 2. Rxe4 Kg2/g1 3. Rg4 + Kh1 4. Nh3 e4 5. Nf2 mate.

Composed by V. Samilo.

George Botterill

QUIZ

1) Which newspaper publisher said recently that if Shakespeare were alive today 'he'd probably be the chief script writer for *Dallas* or *Dynasty*'?
2) Which newspaper publisher plays with model railways at home?
3) Who described whom, in an obituary last week, as having 'a pen sharper than a scalpel'?
4) Who described whom, in an interview published last week, as 'a manoeuvring swine'?
5) Which daughter of a former Tory minister appeared on television last week to help to promote a book?
6) Which wife of a former Tory minister is writing a book called *Coping with Crisis*?
7) Which former Tory minister recently described his ex-agent as a man of 'ability and enterprise' just before the agent was jailed for fraud?
8) In which country was a former prime minister's son sentenced to detention for criminal bankruptcy?
9) In which country was Ali Hassan Murinyi sworn in as President last week?
10) In which country was Anibal Cavaco Silva sworn in as Prime Minister last week?

Answers

1) Rupert Murdoch; 2) David Steevens, new *Express* owner; 3) Ronald Reagan on Charles Douglas-Home; 4) Paul McCartney on John Lennon; 5) Flora Keays; 6) Ann Parkinson; 7) Sir John Nott; 8) New Zealand; 9) Tanzania; 10) Portugal

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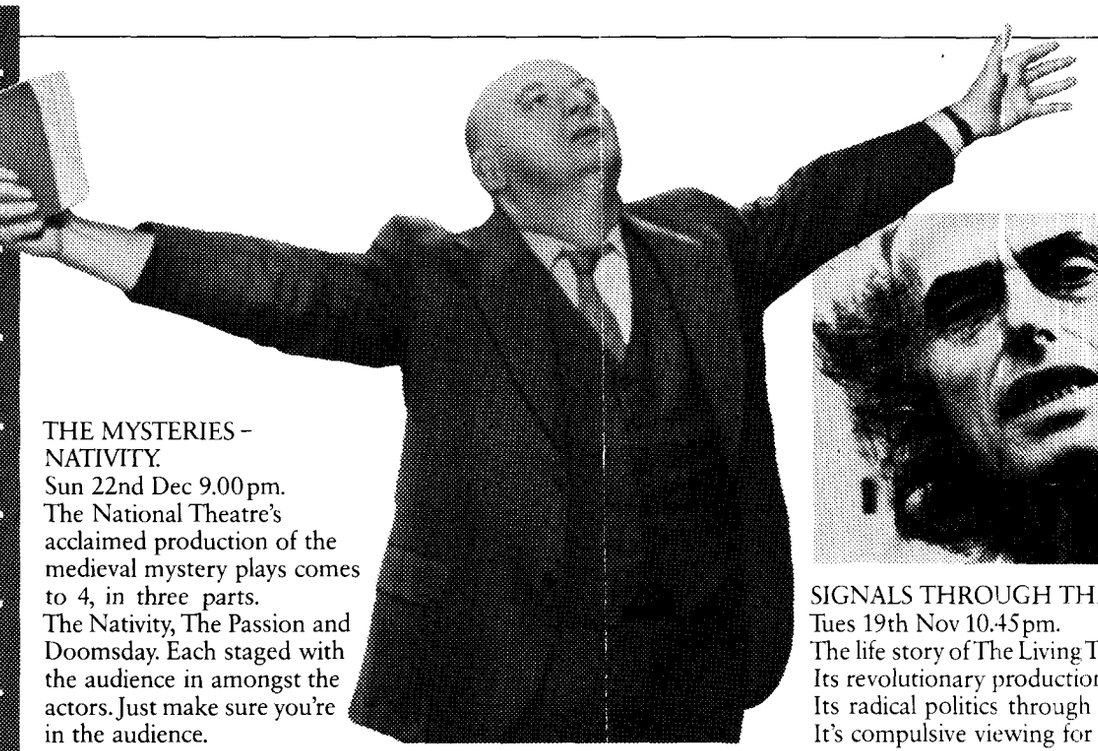

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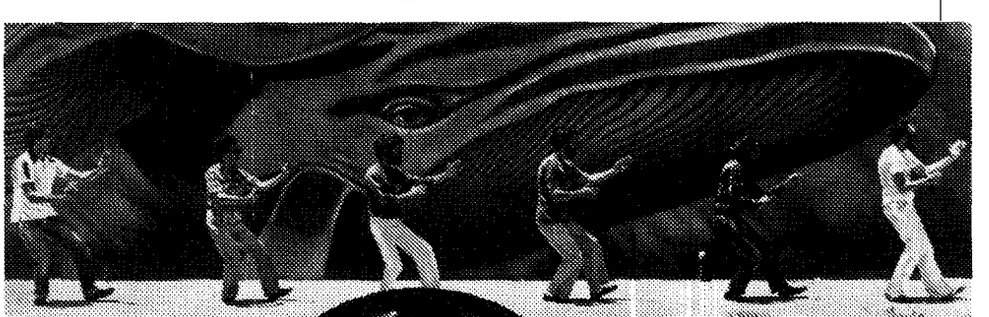

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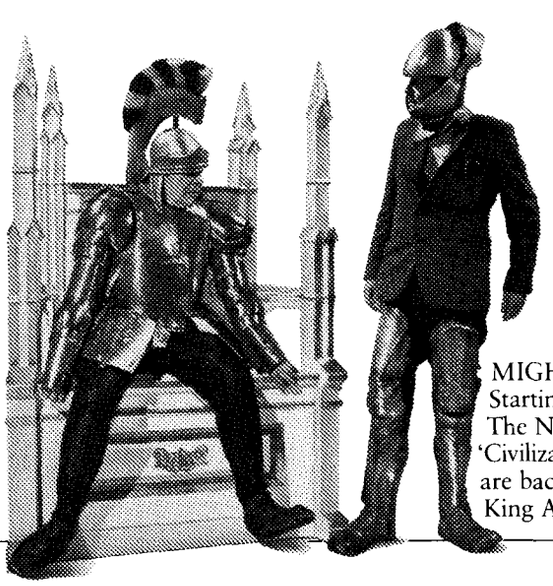
Tues 26th Nov 10.45pm.
A detailed portrait of the composer, with an in-depth look at the composing and staging of his most recent work, Akhnaten. Opera goers won't be going anywhere when this is on.



MIGHTY MOMENTS OF WORLD HISTORY.
Starting Wed 13th Nov 9.00pm.
The National Theatre of Brent's answer to 'Civilization'. Desmond 'Olivier' Dingle and Bernard are back for a new series. Boadicea in drag.
King Arthur in scuba gear. Totally insane.

KEEP YOUR EYE ON 4

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